Fred Barnes
Jackson's Victory Tour

Tom Bethell
Convention Special

THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR

VOL. 17 **SEPTEMBER 1984** **NO. 9**

BACK TO SCHOOL

Excellence in Education: The First Year and Beyond

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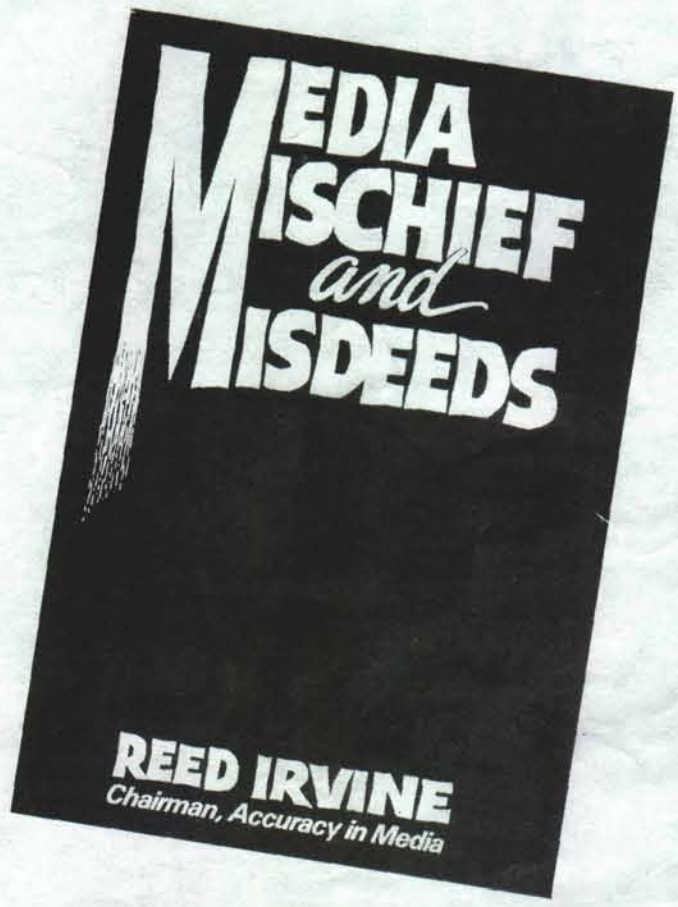

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Volume 17, Number 9, September 1984

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THE CONTINUING CRISIS

•Journalism's silly season has made an early arrival. Usually it's not until August that the daily papers are filled with stories about dogs finding lost boys at the ASPCA pound, and twins separated at birth who discover they both went to dental school. This year thanks to the Democratic Convention, the Olympics, Amtrak, and the Jackson family Victory Tour, news imbecility seems destined to prevail all summer and well into the fall.

•Meeting in a town appropriately filled with odd bedfellows, the Democrats have selected the first woman vice-presidential candidate ever nominated by a major party. Angela Davis begs to differ on that. She's been running for Vice President on the Communist ticket for some years. With millions of members world-wide, the Communists are nothing if not a major political party. (Any other resemblance between Democrats and Communists is strictly coincidental, and no reference to people with real political views is implied or intended.)

•Although she was apparently picked at random from a list of Democratic elected officials with female Christian names, Ms. Ferraro is well qualified to execute the many august responsibilities of the vice-presidential office. And so are Matt Dillon and Bullwinkle the Moose.

•At this same convention, Governor Mario Cuomo of New York State gave a speech which was . . . well, it was as high as it was wide. Senator Edward Kennedy gave another by way of introducing future private citizen Walter Mondale. It was apparent that pauses for laughter and applause had been written into Sen. Kennedy's text. The audience being Democrats, however, and a little slow on the uptake, failed to laugh or applaud on cue. Thus there were merciful periods of silence in the Kennedy exhortations.

•Otherwise, DemCon was so soporific that it even bored the ABC Television Network. Anyone who's watched ABC's regular programming knows how hard this must be to do. ABC pulled the plug and broadcast a rerun of "Hart to Hart." A nice joke, but "I Dream of Jeannie" would have been apposite.

•Israel, too, has been having politics, and at last report has achieved the conservative ideal of minimal government interference in daily life—in this case by having no government at all. The Israeli parliamentary system allows the balance of power to be held by a small number of lunatics with their own political parties. This is a wise method of governance. Much of the random violence in the United States seems to result from lunatics with nothing to do and no adequate means of expressing themselves. The San Ysidro McDonald's massacre, the Westwood sidewalk slaughter, and the Alton Coleman Midwest murder spree are but three recent examples. If we sent these people to Washington to hold the balance of power in Congress, it would keep them busy and out of trouble. Also, we'd know where they all were, and this would simplify things like Olympic security and the FBI Most-Wanted List. Except during political campaigns, of course, when all the dangerous criminals would be running loose (*plus ça change . . .*).

•In the *Guinness Book of World Records* spirit which seems to infect our nation, the news media were scrupulous about pointing out exactly which mass-murder record James Oliver Huberty broke at McDonald's. It was "the largest number of murders committed in one day by a single killer." Apparently this is considered more prestigious than the doubles category. Expect fierce competition to better the score.

•Lebanon is causing headaches and hair-tearing again. This time peace has broken out when least expected, and just after all the international pundits had put the finishing touches on their explanations of why the Lebanese Civil War was an intractable, insoluble, permanent situation.

•Speaking of outrages, the Jackson Five Tour continues unabated. There's Reggie and Jessie and Michael—but who are the other two members of the group?

•As befits silly season, there's been lots of activity among the dialectical materialists. Communists have taken french leave from the government in France. Apparently, they're miffed at François Mitterrand for not wrecking the economy fast enough. Among other things, the French Communists held the portfolio for the Ministry of Vocational Training. Now the KGB will have to find a new way to get secret information about how to decorate portions of *nouvelle cuisine* with tiny, half-cooked carrots.

•Poland is having an amnesty and has let some political prisoners out of jail. Jesse Jackson has not yet called for the United States to do the same with its political prisoners but is expected to any day now.

•Fidel Castro is making conciliatory noises. Seems he wants to re-establish U.S.-Cuban relations. Maybe the old civit cat has changed his smell, or maybe he's noticed that Republican invasions always have air support.

•Other socialist news of note: If mail service has noticeably improved by the time you read this, U.S. postal workers are probably out on strike . . . The FDIC has agreed to give Continental Illinois Bank $4.5 billion if it will shut-up and go away . . . Five wrecks a month or no, Amtrak still has a wonderful safety record. The secret is train service that goes nowhere anyone would want to go at no time anyone would want to go there. Therefore, few passengers are injured or even exist in the first place.

•The World Population Conference has met in Mexico City. Overall theme of the ConFab seems to be that the world has more humans than anyone wants or needs. True, no doubt, but the types who worry about soaring world birth rates seem to be the same types who worry about devastating nuclear death tolls. Frankly, these people should make up their minds.

•Vanessa Williams is out of a job. It's hard to get a rational handle on her case, but it would seem that the officials of the sexually exploitative Miss America pageant have fired Miss Williams for sexually exploiting herself instead of letting them do it. Interesting that no feminists have yet risen to Miss Williams's defense. She was, after all, photographed while engaged in acts that certain of the more militant feminists have been known to advocate. However, a heterosexual trend in feminism has been evident of late. The great advantage of heterosexuality to feminists is that it allows them to torture men instead of each other.

•The Soviets offered to negotiate with President Reagan, and boy were they mad when he said yes. The President is showing the same kind of bad manners that make Americans so disliked when we pay the first price asked in Moroccan rug bazaars.

•Nevertheless the spirit of détente does live on. In return for our keeping those unbearable NBC sportscasters out of Moscow in 1980, the Communist Bloc has agreed not to send any of its hideous athletes to Los Angeles. In the absence of the East German Egg-and-Spoon race team and the Russian Pie-Eating competitors, the United States is expected to reap hundreds, possibly jillions, of gold medals.

•Also, agreement has been reached about the new Hot-Line phone. It will be a beige Princess model with Touch-tone buttons instead of a dial. We had to give in to the Russkies on one key point, however, and there will be no cute message on the answering machine tape.

•In a change from previous decades, the Supreme Court has decided that criminal evidence may be used against criminals to convict them of crimes.

P.J. O'Rourke is former editor in chief of National Lampoon *and author of* Modern Manners: Etiquette for Very Rude People. *(RET is taking advantage of his customary summer break from this column to visit Third World countries ignored by Jesse Jackson.)*

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Will John Q. Public stand for this?
•El Salvador President Jose Napoleon Duarte is trotting the globe seeking support for his newly elected government. If he gets some from Moscow, maybe Congress will lighten up on the death squad criticisms.
•Meanwhile, the Sandinistas cannot find anyone to run against them in the Nicaraguan general elections. You do not wind up making American Express commercials when you lose an election in Nicaragua.
•Former Weatherperson Bernardine Dohrn has discovered a more efficacious method than pipe bombs for destroying the social fabric of America. She passed her New York state bar examination.
•The 4th of July fell on a Wednesday. The 4th is one national holiday that has escaped federally-mandated transformation into a three-day weekend. However, Americans no longer know how to celebrate anything by themselves. A single day off in the middle of the week didn't give most of us time enough to make it to the Epcot Center, so the nation's birthday was skipped this year.
•And Jim Fixx, author of the *Complete Book of Running,* died of a heart attack while jogging. He was 52. Among the manifold attributes of God, we must not forget sense of humor. *—P.J. O'Rourke*

CORRESPONDENCE

Literary Liberals

Congratulations to Peter Shaw for "Literary Lies of Respectable Liberals" (*TAS,* June 1984). Liberals have not only politicized culture for ideological ends, they have done the same thing to academic scholarship, all the while pretending that they are the salt of the earth and the custodians of objectivity.

—Paul Craig Roberts
Wm. E. Simon Chair in Political Economy
Center for Strategic & International Studies
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.

Required Reading

The July 1984 copy of *TAS* arrived just in time for me to make William Tucker's piece ("Black Family Agonistes") required reading in my summer Minorities course. It is, without doubt, the most honest, clear-headed article I've seen addressing the conditions which negate black progress.

Having said that, I'd like to comment on Tucker's assertion that AFDC in the 1930s ruined black social patterns. He maintains that the tragedy occurred because blacks "*trusted* the system." While it is no doubt true that AFDC in the 1930s contributed to disruptive family patterns, the big damage did not occur until the 1960s. The real shame of the matter is that the welfare binge that took place in the sixties occurred at a time when the nation's unemployment rate was 3.5 percent (and only 4 percent among blacks). Blacks, although they trusted the system, were in fact sold the idea that they deserved relief and were entitled to pay without work. Those who did the selling were, by and large, white professors, social workers, professional "activists," and bureaucrats. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward led the way with their article in the *Nation* (May 2, 1966) urging everyone to get on the rolls so we could bankrupt the system and thus provoke a nationalized program of welfare.

Tucker's argument that the ACLU would stand in the way of any substantive reform of the welfare mess is quite right. In 1982, the ACLU went on record as opposing any work requirement as a condition of eligibility for welfare. Given this cast of mind, it is evident that the effects of welfare on child development and family solidarity (mentioned by Tucker) are of no interest to our civil libertarians. Their vigilant watch over our rights does not extend to moral depravity. The only thing that matters is whether those eligible for welfare are on the dole, experiencing their rights and enjoying the fruits of state paternalism.

—William A. Donohue
Chairman, Division of Social Sciences
LaRoche College,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Fan Mail

Just a fan note to say that your excellent Review has finally arrived on the wild shores of this ancient county (via *Encounter*). The articles on Jesse Jackson (*TAS,* May 1984) were something of a revelation. The trouble is that we Europeans obtain most of our information about the States from *Newsweek* and *Time* (both peculiarly anti-British) and this results in a rather low opinion, however unfair, of America. I assure you my thought has changed indeed. One quibble, which is really a compliment: It would have been a bonus if Antony Flew could have given us more detail in his review of *The Discoverers.* Finally the facts about Kathy Boudin & Co. [in Eugene H. Methvin's review] are virtually unknown in Europe.

—Robert M. Pollet
Aylsham, Norfolk
United Kingdom

I have long enjoyed an excellent and inexpensive substitute for psychotropic and hypnotic drugs. Whenever I experience severe melancholia or insomnia I simply dig out some old issues of *TAS* and read Current Wisdom and the Continuing Crisis and laugh myself into dreamless slumber (no hangover, except sore belly muscles). I recommend this elegant treatment to all sour-puss liberal hypochondriacs and insomniacs—YUK! This therapy is timeless and has already been paid for, which appeals to my Vermont Yankee frugality—only one trouble: The treatment is habit-forming and one needs ever larger doses. Carry on. At least you can't call me periphrastic.

—Kevin M. Cosgrove, M.D.
Bronx, New York

The July issue is first rate! The articles are well-written; the book reviews are of high quality and are about books of importance and of interest; and the departments are clever, informative, and even amusing. All-in-all this is an extraordinary issue.

—Henry Heatherly
Lafayette, Louisiana

Florida and EDB

I have read Dr. William R. Havender's article "Cancer Scare of the Month" in the June issue of *The American Spectator.* Dr. Havender's arguments were clear, concise,and convincing. He has very well articulated to your readers many of the points which the Florida Department of Citrus has repeatedly presented to and discussed for years with EPA officials and the Scientific Advisory Panel. We have repeatedly advanced the fact that EDB is the only viable and approved fumigant for citrus against tropical fruit flies. We have constantly pleaded with EPA to permit its continued use until a substitute is found. We have also advocated that such continued use must be properly restricted to assure workers' and consumers' safety. But our requests fell on deaf ears. EPA officials apparently did neither trust nor believe the Florida citrus industry's promise to search diligently for substitute treatment methods, or to use EDB judiciously and safely. In spite of the negative feedback from EPA, we continued our search for new methods and to improve the use and handling of EDB. For example, our scientists have suspected that the recommended dose of EDB may be too high and persisted in calling for a reexamination of the dose/fly mortality relationship. Research by the USDA has just been finalized proving that less than half the recommended amount of EDB is required when the fruit temperature is 65 degrees to achieve the necessary degree of fly mortality. The only change in procedure is to increase fumigation time by 15 minutes.

In January 1984, the Florida citrus industry was forced to switch to methyl bromide for fruit shipped to California or Texas in spite of the reported damage it caused to oranges and tangerines. We have continued a vigorous research program on irradiation since the fall of 1981. Recent results indicate that gamma radiation is effective in killing the Caribbean fruit fly eggs and larvae, but it also results in severe damage to "Valencia" oranges when stored at the recommended temperature of 34 degrees. We have not given up on irradiation, however, and will continue our research effort to ameliorate its effects.

Cold sterilization, developed and approved by the USDA and accepted by Japan as an alternate to EDB, has been widely used by the Florida citrus industry during the 1983-1984 season. Unfortunately, severe chilling damage has resulted from fall and spring shipments and great losses were incurred. Efforts are underway in Florida to eradicate the Caribbean fruit fly through the release of sterile males. But with the constant threat of reinfestation by the Mediterranean, the Mexican, or other fruit flies, there is a need for a reliable standby fumigant or treatment method to assure continued movement of our fruit to the market-place.

We agree with Dr. Havender that EPA and Mr. Ruckelshaus have acted hastily under the heightened media EDB-scare. More restraint should have been exercised by EPA, even under mounting pressure to properly assess the risks and evaluate the alternatives. We hope that a lesson has been learned to avoid repeating the old saw "Decide in Haste, Repent at Leisure."

—W. Bernard Lester
Executive Director
Florida Department of Citrus
Lakeland, Florida

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EDITORIALS

JESSE'S BAFFLED

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Think about the recent Democratic presidential skirmishes. Did "Jewish leaders" set out to make Jesse Jackson "a pariah"? Were critics of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's recent international travels, as he himself says, "finding another way to call somebody nigger"? In terms of comparative bigotry, is it more "racist" to close one's account at an Arab-owned bank than to use ethnic slurs in "casual conversation that had no political or religious overtones"? Jesse Jackson files an affirmative to all of the above, and hopes that his fellow Americans will find these questions very enlightening.

Strain grows on the man who has been called by so many and who even called himself "the conscience of the Democratic party." Nonetheless he still gives interviews, and in an amazing one with a *Los Angeles Times* reporter last month he reflected on all that has happened to him since he forsook his self-help outfit, People United to Serve Humanity, in quest of the Democratic nomination. He spoke of "the white press," its "Aryan arrogance," and the "white women" of the National Organization for Women who in convention assembled pilfered his historic idea of a female running mate "and did not even invite me to come there."

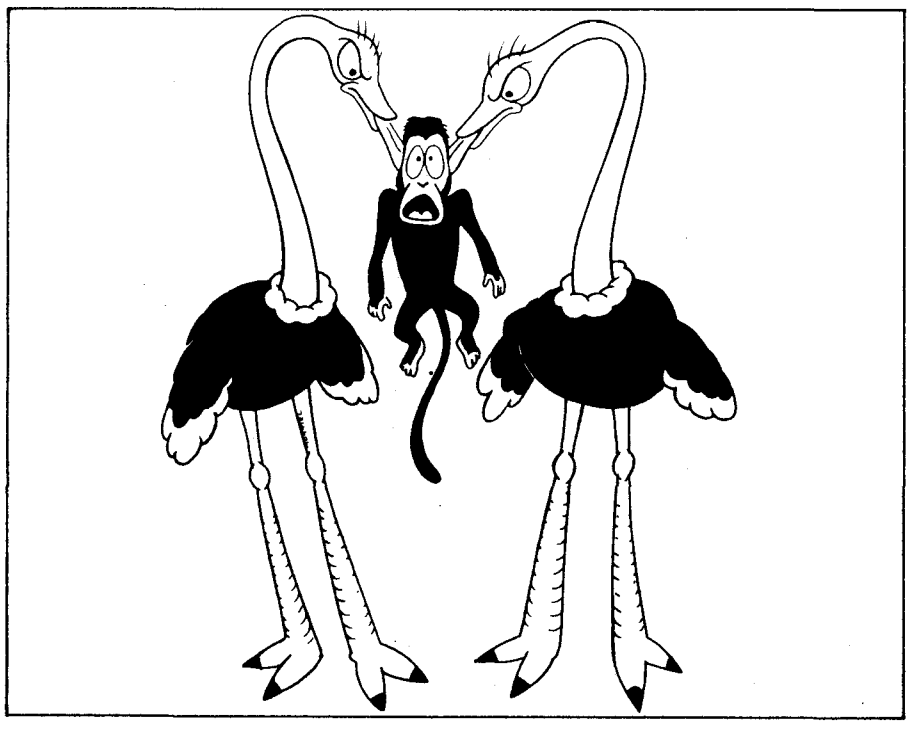
I am no psychologist nor even a reader of palms, but I detected a note of bafflement in the Rev. Jackson, a man who is usually rather ebullient and quite cocksure. Was he still more baffled in the days following his interview when he found himself being scorned again for speaking in crude and invidious terms? My guess is that he was, and with reason. After all, in recent years, his fellow Democrats have raised such rude calculations as ethnic heritage, race, class, sex, and even "sexual orientation" to the level of political and philosophical imperatives. In the modern Democratic party you are most inescapably what your chromosomes and your bloodlines dictate.

Today, after years spent debasing democratic values, the Democratic party is the party of race, color, creed, national origin, and an amplitude of other barbaric considerations. Somehow its theoreticians believe that they can make these matters the credentials for political participation and thereby improve the body politic, ameliorate antagonisms, and eliminate baseness. Now the Rev. Jackson is being shunned for ignoble utterances, and it perplexes him. Reading his bitter and woebegone pronouncements last month brought to mind a favorite maxim so right for our brassy times: Whom the gods would destroy they first make famous.

The Rev. Jackson was raised from the neighborhoods of Southside Chicago and made into one of the most famous personages in the Republic, perhaps the world. He was boomed as an intellect, a moral genius, and the most eloquent candidate in the race. Of course, all these claims were preposterous, even the last which confuses volubility with a quality that demands more than mere passion. Eloquence demands persuasiveness and clarity. The Rev. Jackson was passionate, but his utterances were always stupendously muddled, and he persuaded very few to change their ideas and accept his Third World view of things. In point of fact, even many blacks who voted for him did not share his views, for he was the most left-wing candidate ever to play a large role in a major party's nominating process.

Yet liberal pundits and fellow Democrats saw only his skin and so they showered him with huzzah huzzahs, pronouncing him a hero to his race, an inspiration to the down and out, a prophet of the politics of race, color, creed, national origin, and whatever esoterica lay ahead. No wonder the Rev. Jackson is in the dumps, but let us hope that his invidious campaign represents the end of such vulgar and dangerous procedures. □

Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Post *column syndicated by King Features.*



WELCOME TO AMERICA

The wonder of America combined with the prospect of an Olympiad uncorrupted by the Soviet bloc's state-owned stallions and geldings is now attracting a vast throng of tourists to our shores. Let us hope that they have a swell time, but caution is in order. Tourists can be woefully confused by foreign customs. Words that mean one thing back home frequently have an entirely different meaning abroad. Moreover it must be borne in mind that America is in the midst of an election year, hence some of our words will have no meaning at all. We must be patient with these welcome guests.

Gastronomes visiting us from some Asian countries, for instance, may order a hot dog and expect to sink their teeth into a warm spaniel. They will be disappointed, for such delicacies are taboo over here. A Frenchman may create a row when the toothpaste he orders turns out not to be an adhesive for his dentures. Doubtless in time the intelligent tourist will master these difficulties or be deported. Yet can he ever be expected to penetrate the meaning of our contemporary political ceremonies and oratory? So gifted are our pols at according solemnity to what are in effect piffles and to distorting the meaning of plain English that many of our most seasoned political observers are frequently confused. In fact our talented pols regularly hoodwink the Republic's great news organizations into uncritically passing along euphemisms, misnomers, and loaded terms useful to their schemes.

Last month, for instance, while reporting on the National Organization for Women's diktats to poor Walter Mondale, the news organizations repeatedly spoke of "the women's movement" as though it were a movement representing the views of American women. Actually the term is a misnomer as inaccurate as it is misleading. Diverse and individualistic, American women cannot be subordinated by a movement, and no serious pollster has shown that the feminism of NOW characterizes

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American women. The so-called women's movement is nothing more than the feminist movement.

Furthermore no reliable polls support NOW's claim that Mr. Mondale's candidacy will be strengthened by a feminist running mate. Imagine the frowns that would darken the faces of NOW's exaltées if Mr. Mondale had invited UN Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick aboard. By all odds she is now the woman most competent to run our government, and she remains a Democrat; but she is no feminist. Rather she is a mainstream American woman with normal expectations from government and society. She would rebel at being lumped into the so-called women's movement because, unlike our journalists, she recognizes it as an ideologically biased misnomer minted by her political opponents on the left.

Liberalism is another term bound to confuse our guests. In most of their countries a liberal is a citizen who eschews government involvement in private lives. In America there is almost no area of private life that the gringo liberal deems off-limits. Actually so devoted to government interloping has the American liberal become that it is more exact to call him a socialist, albeit a socialist who knows not the writings of Dr. Marx. Yet for reasons that remain inscrutable to me very few American liberals want to call themselves socialists.

Consider the Rev. Jackson. He is glad to be called a civil rights leader, but surely this is only part of the label. From his lurid analyses of our domestic condition, abounding as they do with gruesome tales of huddled masses and rich exploiters, it is apparent that his lot is with the fabulists of socialism. All his favorite foreign countries are socialist, some being decidedly totalitarian. In Central America last June he actually spoke of the International Monetary Fund, which pours billions of dollars in loans into the Third World, as an institution that has "raped Latin America of its resources," and he called the Panama Canal an American "badge of disgrace." Yet he is not even termed a left-wing civil rights leader.

Very few of the opponents of Ronald Reagan are termed left-wing, though most of these so-called reformers have moved steadily left for years until some are downright radical. Somewhat like guests at a masked ball they come to politics wearing disguises. The results confuse journalists and tourists alike. Beware. □

CAPITOL IDEAS

OUT OF SIGHT IN SAN FRANCISCO

by Tom Bethell

On the day before the convention began I bumped into Lili Osborne, Eric Hoffer's friend, a block or two from Moscone Convention Center near Mission Street. The AFL-CIO protest parade was just beginning to file down Market Street, and so we went to watch it for a while. Eric, of course, had been a longshoreman (he died in San Francisco last year), and Lili told me that she herself had joined the Seafarer's International when she was a tuna- and sardine-packer in Monterey. Her husband Selden, a Stanford graduate, had joined the longshoremen in the 1930s, believing, as people then did, that the revolution would originate with the working class. He contributed in part to Hoffer's composite portrait of the "true believer." Today he is a peace activist.

"It's sad that unions are no longer representative of what they set out to be," Lili said, gazing out at the marchers. "Maybe they've had their day, I don't know." She didn't elaborate, but you couldn't help noticing the adidas-shod, pale-pink-preppie shirted yuppies in among the blue collars and the railroad hats. "No U.S. Intervention in Central America!" read the typical yuppie placard. This seemed odd, since trade unions and military spending are clearly symbiotic. But then yuppies do not really have trade union interests at heart. As Michael Kinsley wrote a few weeks ago in the *New Republic,* yuppies are downwardly mobile, finding it increasingly difficult to live in the style their parents took for granted; not self-consciously *joining* the working class, like Selden Osborne in the thirties, but tumbling into it willy-nilly; marching along with it, protesting Reaganism with it at the outset of the Democratic Convention.

Their goal, it seemed to me, was to arrest their downward mobility by manipulating government; that is, by becoming certified as victims and thus eligible for inclusion as one more group in the Recipient Sector—the Democratic party's constituency. By parading under labor's banners, they epitomized the rhetorical confusion of the convention.

Next came the gay/lesbian protest parade, coming down Market Street in the opposite direction. There was something really depraved about this collective act of defiance—an attempt to represent choice as victimization ("We demand massive federal funding to end the AIDS epidemic"), and to neutralize opposition by selective appeal to Christian virtue ("Bigotry is Immoral!").

San Franciscans took it meekly on the jaw, as the 50,000 to 75,000–strong phalanx came cawing and crowing and shrieking down the street. Many bystanders were no doubt affronted but were too outnumbered and too afraid to register any protest. The only exceptions were three or four men from Long Beach, who stood on a corner carrying tremendous, sail-sized banners ("No! No! Homo!" "Read the Bible While You're Able!").

The leader, a man in his thirties with a cropped beard, wore a crash helmet, and he said his name was Bob Bible. Around him was a tremendous din of catcalls and whistle-blowing. He lifted his bullhorn to his lips, and his admonition "Read the Bible people!" came reverberating loud and clear across Market Street. "You haven't been reading the Bible!"

In response there was a steady chant: "Gay Rights Now! Gay Rights Now!" Some paraders came by with a street-wide sign: "Enola Gay Faggot Affinity Group. Gomorrah for a Tomorrah!"

"That's the good thing about America," said Bob Bible. "Your rights are protected. God bless America! Show God you appreciate it by reading the Bible!"

By now Bob was surrounded by five very large cops in motorcycle gear.

"Thing is, we've got 50,000 people here," one said, very close to Bob. They were standing crash helmet to crash helmet and speaking in conversational tones. "We've got this problem with people who might get violent."

"I need to preach, don't I?" Bob said.

"Wouldn't it be a good thing to have your own parade . . . " As the cop spoke (and there are no name tags on these San Francisco cops), Bob put his bullhorn up again and called out, "Repent!" →

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The cop took the bullhorn and examined it carefully, as though it might contain a concealed hand grenade. He found it to be unconstitutional. Bob Bible lacked the necessary permit.

"Can you do this some other time?" asked the policeman. "Could you be Christian and do what we ask you to do?"

"The Bible says they're an abomination," said Bob. And again he called out "Repent," but this time no one could possibly hear him.

"Why don't you forget about it?" said Badge No. 1674. "Can you do this in the name of Jesus?"

And that was the last we heard from Bob Bible. Toward the end of the parade came excommunicated Mormon and presidential candidate, Sonia Johnson, and a small knot of her feminist faithful; and behind her—behind the AIDS patients dressed in white—was a motley assortment of clergymen, from various denominations.

That evening I went to a smart media party given by the *National Journal* at the Circle Gallery, close to Union Square. Almost the first person I saw was Michael Kinsley of the *New Republic* (he writes the TRB column). He was wearing a cream-colored suit and looked more like a lawyer than a journalist, most of whom were wearing regulation woodwards—navy blue blazer, grey slacks, and button down shirt with tie firmly in place (top button undone for investigative work only). I asked Kinsley if he could think of a media angle. Everyone was saying that there were 15,000 media here for the convention, outnumbering the delegates four to one. And consciously or unconsciously, everyone knew that this was a deeply depressing state of affairs.

Kinsley (who incidentally was wearing yuppie shoes that I think may have been made on an Indian Reservation) pointed out that whereas the media were being paid to attend this convention, the delegates were here at their own expense.

Somehow this surprised me. I knew I would never have thought of it myself. Later on it occurred to me that it belied Elizabeth Drew's complaint that too much money is flowing into politics. If the Democratic party can't afford to pay for the hotel rooms of its delegates, it would seem that there's not enough. (In fact some delegates—those swearing fealty to such special interests as labor—were financed.)

Later we were joined by Robert M. Kaus, formerly of the Hollings campaign, and Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek*, which made us a *Washington Monthly* alumni quartet. Then Michael Barone, co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics* and a *Washington Post* writer, came over and shared some of his findings with us. My goodness, Geraldine Ferraro had only just been named by Mondale, and Barone had already been all over her Queens district, up and down Queens Boulevard, up to her office, back and forth, and he had collected a thousand bits of data and probably by now had them stored in a computer.

Here we were still in our starting blocks and he had completed the first lap. He asked me what I thought about the Ferraro choice. What I *meant* to say was that none of my conservative friends could understand what all the hullaballoo was about; that she was a pro-abortion left-winger who in a former age might very easily have been excommunicated from the Catholic Church . . . but what I stumbled out with was: "She doesn't balance the ticket . . . "

"Interesting," said Barone, clicking the verdict into his computer. Then he strode off in search of more data, and I knew that within an hour or so he would be another lap ahead.

The next day Ferraro and Mondale

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came to an open-air welcome rally on Market Street. The crowd waited with extraordinary patience for nearly an hour. The thin-lipped and pointy-jawed Ferraro conveyed a sense of ambition that bordered on the ruthless, I thought. There was a glint rather than a gleam in her eye, and she read a dull little speech through granny glasses. At the end of it she raised her fist, not her open hand. (But at this year's convention, unlike 1980, the rest of the Democrats waved open-handedly from the platform rather than with clenched fist. I take this to be a sign of improvement within the party.)

Joan Mondale (Joan of Art) had evidently dieted to the point of emaciation, and her daughter Eleanor looked as though she was planning to attend some punk-rock event, with her loose pink tie and mid-calf grey pants. Old Mondale came to the mike and said we should "get these God-awful nucalar weapons under control," by which I suppose he meant that the U.S. should stop using the latest technology in building them. Then he said we should "get these deficits down"—hardly a stirring message.

He seemed like a nice enough fellow, though. He has a sense of humor, and I didn't get the impression that he was an ideologue. Mondale strikes one above all as a deferential soul, perhaps having been rebuked once too often in childhood. He surely is a man more comfortable taking orders than giving them. This would be tolerable in almost anyone except the President of the United States. And of course one has no more confidence in the people that will be advising him than one did in Jimmy Carter's court.

Again, when Mondale gave his acceptance speech on Thursday night, you sensed in him a meekness that spilled over into sheepishness. When he delivered a line you almost expected him to look back over his shoulder in the direction of off-stage aides to check that he had read it as he was supposed to, and that he was doing okay, and that he really was, after all, a regular decent guy, doing the right thing for his country and for his party.

When I went into the Convention Center later that day, my heart sank: It was nothing but a great big milling scrum of about ten thousand people circulating about endlessly, each with a necklace of credentials, and most of them further festooned with badges and buttons. I caught sight of Morton Kondracke of the *New Republic* charging along with another journalist at his heels, and Kondracke was crying out to anyone who would listen: "Where's the Cuomo press conference!" Eventually a Cuomo aide appeared, and even he was immediately swallowed up by a globular cluster of reporters and cameras and microphones. My heart went out to the daily press. Imagine having to phone one's editor in the midst of this melee, and being told that one had just missed some vital development—a Cuomo press conference or whatever—that a wire service reporter had chosen to treat as "news." Hundreds, or thousands, of reporters covering the same event tends to result in a uniformity of interpretation for this reason.

And perhaps that is why the presence of so many reporters had a dispiriting effect. Journalists were not only interviewing journalists, they were joking about it, apologizing for it, and deploring it. The periodical press, I found, were bivouacked several hundred feet from the podium. The *Newsweek* people had binoculars on their desks, and I was behind them. When I held my arm out straight, the tip of my little finger obscured the podium. So distant were we that the sound and picture from the big TV monitors were confusingly out of synch—like watching a man chopping a log across a valley and hearing the sound on the upstroke. Mel Elfin of

(continued on page 48)

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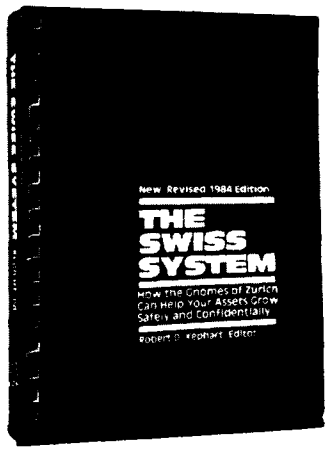
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Chester E. Finn, Jr.

THE EXCELLENCE BACKLASH: SOURCES OF RESISTANCE TO EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Restoring quality to American education is easier said than done.

"The 'tidal wave' of reform in education may be a washout," headlined a somber *New York Times* report in early May. Its message was not that the American public was losing its ardor for better schools a scant year after the National Commission on Excellence in Education proclaimed a "rising tide of mediocrity" and galvanized concern and reform activity across the land. Rather, explained reporter Gene Maeroff, "Educators are asking whether plans to improve schools might be more complicated, and less effective, than they appear on paper."

Embedded here were two glum realities with which education's "excellence movement" must now contend. The first is the inevitable reminder that it is never quite so easy to effect a large scale reform as it was to identify the problem that prompted the reform. The second, however, is more troubling: Most of the doubts, grumbling, footdragging, and second-guessing are coming not from the reformers, who by and large are laymen with a fairly straightforward view of what schools ought to do and what children ought to learn, but from the education establishment itself.

As one monitors school reform efforts around the United States, alongside keen public enthusiasm, bold proposals by citizens' task forces and blue ribbon panels, and an unprecedented elevation of educational quality to the top of the agenda of governors, legislators, business tycoons, even presidential candidates, one also detects the early signs of a full-fledged backlash.

I do not mean to be a grinch. It's been an enormously exciting couple of years in American education, profoundly heartening to those who felt that our schools had gone slack and that one of the most urgent challenges facing the society was to elevate its educational expectations and school standards for all our young people. Educational excellence today enjoys a legitimacy that it has not had for at least a quarter century. Actual policy changes have been adopted by a number of school boards and legislatures, and some of these are more imaginative and farther-reaching than anything in memory.

Yet the hard part lies ahead. The problems have been identified, they have been analyzed, and an array of solutions have been delineated. But nowhere have these solutions actually been put into place and carried out, let alone been checked to see whether they work as intended.

As school reopens in September, the premier issue is not whether we know how to strengthen teaching and upgrade learning, nor whether the public has the will to do so. It is whether the nascent backlash will halt the excellence movement before anything much has actually moved.

Note well that the backlash is not a unitary phenomenon. Some of it is simple caution. Some of it bespeaks the ordinary inertia of a ponderous public sector monopoly. Some of it attests to the authentic difficulty of repairing a large piece of complex policy machinery that must continue to function while it is being fixed. But a good deal of it has to do with "principled" resistance, not to the abstract goal of education excellence but to the operational implications and policy requisites of that broad concept.

I say "principled" resistance, mindful that more than a little of it is self-interest, greed, timidity, and sloth masquerading as principle. But the principled, high-minded resistance of those who proclaim fealty to the goal of excellence itself is far harder to refute than overt self-interest or laziness, so we should not be surprised that it takes the nobler form.

Do not misunderstand. Thousands of Americans, including a goodly number of practicing educators, are doing their best in 1984 to build levees against the rising tide of mediocrity, to fortify schools that have been gravely weakened by what the National Commission termed "an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament." The excellence movement is a movement well-endowed with leaders, with tireless laborers, with ardent enthusiasts and with a handful of genuine heroes. These include teachers, principals, superintendents, board members, legislators, businessmen, journalists, scholars, governors, parents and other "ordinary" citizens. They know full well that a struggle is underway for the soul and spirit of American education and that the outcome of that struggle has the most profound consequences for the 44 million youngsters returning to our elementary and secondary schools this autumn, and for the hundreds of millions who will follow them in the years ahead.

In the paragraphs that follow, I undertake to limn ten early manifestations of the "excellence backlash"; then to sketch five dilemmas that plague the reform movement itself; and finally to note three sizable problems that would be difficult to solve even if perfect harmony prevailed within the excellence movement and even if there were no significant resistance to overcome.

Ten Strokes of the Backlash

1. Things aren't so bad as the critics charge.

The commonest reaction to an unwelcome accusation is denial. Like everyone else, educators display that normal human response. Indeed, the schools have absorbed so much criticism over the years that their personnel may be better prepared than most to fight back: to muster data purporting to show that all is well; to assert that the critics cited the wrong indicators; and to hint that the jurors were not fully qualified to render verdicts in this specialized domain.

Accordingly, we are informed that the test score data are obsolete, that

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some of the averages have (depending on your point of view) "turned up" or "bottomed out" in the last two years, and that the surveys on which international comparisons are based do not really lend themselves to clear conclusions. A favorite thesis asserts that reading and math scores in the early grades have held steady and in certain instances actually risen, meaning that the "only" problem is the decline of knowledge and cognitive skills among older students. The most popular rebuttal, however, is that the success of the United States in establishing universal "access" to education for youngsters of all backgrounds and ability levels is so stupendous an accomplishment that to suggest children aren't learning enough is to cavil and pettifog. "I say unequivocally," writes president Ted Comstock of the National School Boards Association, "that American schools and the opportunity for education in this land are the best in the world."

A variation on this theme is that professional educators were already quite familiar with the shortcomings of the schools, thank you, and were doing their level best to redress them, that the critics haven't really said anything new, and that they don't begin to understand how tricky these problems are anyway. "How long," asks a Minnesota school superintendent, "has it been since the experts have been in the foxholes and witnessed first hand what's happening in American education today?"

2. The fault is not in ourselves, dear educators, but in our stars.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the excellence movement has beaten down the first contention and established the proposition that all is not as it should be in American education. Who is responsible?

The surest way to duck responsibility for the unsatisfactory outcomes of schooling is to establish as "fact" that the root causes lie well outside the school itself and that these are so tough and complex as to be beyond the capacity of educators and educational institutions. This mode of responsibility-shifting takes several forms. There is the old radical lament that American society is rotten to its repressive, exploitative, and hierarchical core, and that schools are simply captives of their corrupt environment. Then there is the conservative complaint, paraphrasing Lester Maddox's famous crack about prisons, that what the schools need in order to succeed is a better class of student; that it's naive to expect them to do much with the ill-disciplined, lawless, drug-riddled products of underclass households. Finally, there is the scholarly observation by economists and sociologists—James Coleman and Christopher Jencks come to mind—that available evidence gives scant ground for expecting normal-sized alterations in the nature of schooling to yield big differences either in how much children learn or in their life prospects.

We must concede much wisdom in the observation that schools have been asked to take on social problems well beyond their competence and that they cannot singlehandedly lift people out of poverty, heal wounded psyches, or compensate for lousy parents and squalid neighborhoods. Indeed, there is little schools can do for individuals who do not assimilate their norms and values and more-or-less voluntarily submit to their routines.

Still and all, schools *are* responsible—and can fairly be held accountable—for what takes place within their walls; for the standards that they set; for the curriculum that they select; for the caliber of teaching in their classrooms; for the expectations that they communicate to youngsters; for the quality of the books that they assign; for the examples they set of the interdependence of liberty and order; and for the values that they emphasize. These are not simple matters, to be sure, but it is the failure of many schools and school systems to handle them satisfactorily that fed the present discontent and catalyzed the contemporary "excellence movement." That is why it is so disheartening to see some practitioners and policymakers plead impotency.

To be more precise: We rarely encounter educators who deny that they can influence these aspects of schooling at least a little. Rather, we find the suggestion that tinkering with such school-level variables won't do much good unless and until other things happen that are way beyond the power of educators to effect. Thus Vanderbilt education dean Willis Hawley warns that "If our efforts to improve the schools for all children are not accompanied by attempts to reduce the incidence of poverty, we should not expect the changes advocated by such estimable groups as the National Commission on Excellence in Education to amount to much . . . " Even school-board members, who may be regarded as the main bridge between the professionals and the general public, are given to wails and lamentation over that which they cannot control. Asked by the *American School Board Journal* to identify their top three "concerns" from a list of thirteen possibilities, most selected "lack of financial support," declining enrollments, and parental apathy. Only 24 percent ranked "finding good teachers" among their premier concerns and just 15 percent listed "poor curriculum/standards," though these latter two problems command the top of the reform agenda of the excellence movement and are both matters on which a determined local school board could have an immense impact.

Board members are not alone in ascribing poor educational performance to parents—or to the youngsters themselves. As *Education Week* summarized the explanations offered by the Illinois State Board of Education staff for why academic achievement of eleventh graders in that state slipped markedly between 1970 and 1981: "The reasons for the decline lie mainly outside the classroom. . . . The decline can be traced more to the students' attitudes and their family life than to the schools. The state board's analysts have concluded that the family environment and a student's 'thirst for knowledge' have at least as much impact on achievement as certain elements of the school setting . . . "

Outside the home, there is always the fear of nuclear war as an excuse for low educational achievement.

And in a column that ranks among the most disingenuous public utterances of our time, a quondam senior player on the Carter White House team that did as much as possible to transfer traditional family responsibilities to governmental agencies, none other than Jody Powell, opined that "the schools are not educating our children in large measure because parents are doing an increasingly lousy job of raising them."

Outside the home, there is always the fear of nuclear war as an excuse for low educational achievement. Gordon Cawelti of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (an influential organization of the middle-level school administrators who determine what is actually taught) asserts that one of the "subtle factors that dampen students' motivation to strive for academic excellence" but that the reformers fail to acknowledge is "anxiety about their future. High school students," Cawelti says, "tend to be much more concerned about the threat of nuclear war than adults believe them to be. Many don't expect to live out their full lives." So why study?

It is well to recall that schools are not omnicompetent social reform institutions and that the educators who operate them are not solely responsible for their policies and resource levels, much less for the attitude of their clients or the foreign policies of hostile nations. But the *sine qua non* of education reform is that those with day-to-day responsibility for school management and staffing must possess the professional equivalent of what psychologists term a "sense of personal efficacy": the conviction that they can significantly affect the character of the institutions within which they work, *and that this is worth doing*. So long as the shortcomings of the educational system are ascribed to cosmic forces and vast societal transformations, those within the schools are effectively absolved of responsibility for the consequences of their own actions.

3. Better education is a bad investment.

Recalling how much of the force behind the excellence movement derives from the conviction that a more thoroughly educated populace is a prerequisite for prosperity—locally, regionally, and in international competition with such rivals as Japan—it is disconcerting to be informed by a small but vocal crew of scholars that the school reformers have misread the economic entrails. The staunchest proponents of this heterodox view are Stanford professors Henry Levin and Russell Rumberger. Levin disputes the widely held assumption that transforming our smokestack economy into a sleek "high tech" system demands a more thoroughly schooled workforce. Rather, he predicts that "the expansion of the lowest-skill jobs in the American economy will vastly outstrip the growth of high-technology ones. And the proliferation of high technology industries and their products is far more likely to reduce the skill requirements for jobs in the U.S. economy than to upgrade them." His colleague Rumberger asserts that continued emphasis on education may even "be injurious to the performance of the economy." He reasons that "workers with more education than their jobs require are likely to suffer more job dissatisfaction," that they will therefore be less productive, and that the frustration kindled by the mismatch between their ample educations and the paltry skills needed for their jobs will yield absenteeism, high turnover rates, and so forth.

Neither Levin nor Rumberger (or anyone else I've encountered) denies that sundry non-economic benefits

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might result from a better educated citizenry. They merely assert that the single most influential reason for the reformist zeal of the nation's governors and business leaders is null and void!

4. The commission reports are vague and impractical.

This is both a truism and a mischievous excuse for maintaining the status quo. Blue ribbon panels rarely produce detailed diagrams for wiring and plumbing the structures that they recommend building; instead they supply the "artist's rendering" of what those structures would look like if the designers, engineers, and craftsmen do their own work meticulously. Commissions and task forces function primarily as national agenda-setters, explaining what's lacking in the current social edifices and moving us toward consensus about the need for newer or better ones. That is basically all they can do, but it's an essential first step in the reform process, particularly when dealing with an enterprise so huge, inert, and decentralized as public education. To fault them for not supplying the detailed blueprints is like criticizing General Eisenhower for not having personally supervised the fueling of the landing craft for the Normandy invasion.

Nevertheless, we read in influential education journals that "many of the recommendations [of the various commissions] for improvement must be regarded as simplistic, conservative and unrealistic"; that "the case they make takes the form of a polemic, not a reasoned treatise"; that "the Commission resorted to superficial analysis, distortions of data, and reckless accusations"; and so forth. In perhaps the most thoroughgoing critique of this genre, the Brookings Institution's Paul Peterson wrote that "the studies do not address the most difficult conceptual and political issues. Instead, they reassert what is well-known, make exaggerated claims on flimsy evidence, pontificate on matters about which there could scarcely be agreement, and make recommendations that either cost too much, cannot be implemented or are too general to have any meaning."

It is, of course, entirely predictable that if the commissions had set forth meticulously detailed "action plans" they would have been faulted for overweening authoritarianism, for excessive standardization, for not appreciating the subtle processes of organizational change, and for trashing the historic American philosophy of local control of education.

5. The problems of American education cannot be solved by means that ordinary mortals can comprehend, much less by those that policymakers can command.

Exploring this argument in any depth would take us far into the dim reaches where educators engage in complex disputation with one another. Simply stated, it runs like this: Policymakers influenced by the excellence movement are trying to reform American education by mandating standards, by enforcing rules, and by demanding certain kinds of uniformity from schools, from teachers and from children. They are employing what some have termed a "command and control" strategy. But—charge the critics—education is too complicated, too variegated, and too subtle a process to be improved in this manner. It will respond only to intricate, comprehensive strategies of a kind that only those long-steeped in the lore and scholarship of the profession can devise.

In this vein, John Goodlad, former dean of the UCLA School of Education, tireless education researcher, and author of one of the most richly textured (and least actionable) analyses of the past two years, cautions against "installed change" and presses for "developing the capability of people who run schools to think about the problems in their schools and to look for remedies." "Significant educational improvement of schooling," he explains, "requires that we focus on entire schools, not just teachers or principals or curricula or organization. . . . It is essential to realize that all are interconnected and that changing any one element ultimately affects the others." The president of the Minnesota State Board of Education insists that "the long-term goals that our education system must accomplish will only occur when we transform our overall delivery format to one that will serve each learner to his or her optimum." A Wisconsin high-school principal describes his "frustration" that the "major reports on schooling . . . seem to call for 'more of the same' wrapped in a different package, rather than promoting visionary reform that will better prepare students for the astounding changes predicted by futurists."

Now there is nothing much wrong with comprehensiveness as a reform goal, and there is something to be said for recognizing that the school is a complex institution with many moving parts that have to be reasonably well synchronized with each other. It is also healthy to seek alternatives to the kinds of "top down" reforms that prize uniformity above diversity. (Though many of the "comprehensive" reformers with the greatest ardor for school-level sovereignty recoil from "vouchers" or any other radical overhaul of the bureaucratic/monolithic structure of public education.) Still, the perception that it isn't worth fixing a leaky faucet because the whole plumbing system ought to be replaced is apt to result in no change whatsoever, inasmuch as we never really have the political running-room, the daring, or the funds with which to reconstruct the entire enterprise.

6. First send money; then talk to us about improvement.

Easing some of the more stubborn problems in American education will surely entail alterations in established school spending patterns, and in some instances additional funds will be needed. But there's a night-and-day difference between the familiar demand of the education profession that the public supply additional money "up front" for what sounds awfully like "more of the same," and the insistence of the excellence movement that any added resources hinge on bold changes in policy and practice that hold substantial promise of yielding different results.

The public agrees with the reformers, if some powerful opinion poll data are to be believed. It will dig deeper to pay for markedly better education, but it seems no longer to believe educators who insist that spending more on the current system will produce more learning.

After all, a fine textbook costs no more than a lousy one; a challenging homework assignment is no harder to devise than a simple-minded one; the same principal could spend his time evaluating and strengthening the classroom performance of teachers rather than policing the corridors and writing memos to the superintendent. Many lackluster school practices could be burnished with no significant dollar cost at all.

Even those reforms that are assumed to be very expensive might turn out not to be. Consider teacher salaries. It is generally agreed that the average beginning wage ($12,000 to $15,000 a year in most places) is insufficient to attract able men and women into the classroom, and that the pay given to experienced teachers (averaging about $22,000 in 1983-84) is not enough to keep them. So, the conventional wisdom holds, all teachers must be paid substantially more, and the public must be prepared to foot that immense bill if it wants better schools.

Well, maybe. Two other ways to think about teacher pay might yield different conclusions. First, why not pay more to good teachers than we pay to mediocre teachers? (This is the essence of the merit pay and "master teacher" proposals so popular with the public and so hated by the NEA.) Indeed, why pay truly bad teachers at all? Second, why not make teaching a full-time job and compensate it accordingly? Today's teacher salary is generally associated with a 180-day school year, while most Americans work about 240 days a year. If teachers worked a 240-day year, and were paid *at their current rates,* the average teacher salary last year would have been almost $30,000. We would no longer regard teaching as poorly paid. And if we treated the school year as having four quarters, with every child attending for three of them, we'd only need three-fourths as many teachers as we have today. What a splendid opportunity to weed out inept teachers *and* to produce a huge salary boost for

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those who remain, all at no additional cost to the taxpayers. By turning teaching into a full-time job, we would also do much to modernize an occupational structure designed for spinster ladies in an agrarian age.

It's never as simple as that, of course. Some parents would not want their children to attend school in July and sit home in February. Some school buildings would have to be air-conditioned before they could be used in the summer. (Note, however, that this scheme would require just three-fourths as many classrooms as we use now.) But the point is straightforward: Low-cost alternatives *can* be devised for many of the "big ticket" items on the school reform shopping list, provided we try to think in that mode.

As for the thinking of educational leaders about such matters, it is well-illustrated in the words of former U.S. education commissioner Harold Howe II:

> The most glaring omission from the new studies of the shortcomings of education and recommendations for reform is any detailed estimate of attendant costs and how they are to be met. . . . A very rough estimate suggests that at least $20 billion to $30 billion a year in new funds will be needed to put the schools on an upward course.

Meanwhile, state after state—including poor jurisdictions such as Mississippi and Tennessee, as well as such wealthy ones as California—is appropriating additional funds, even imposing new taxes to pay for its school reforms, and there is every reason to expect that pattern to continue. The American public is not stingy toward education—we spent 7 percent of GNP on public education in 1980, while Japan spent 5.8 percent—but the extra outlays it is now making are contingent on major policy reforms. The question is whether this "linkage" can be preserved against the plaints and criticisms of the unilateralists who would lighten the public pocketbook first and then—they say—produce something in return.

7. Whoa! You're trying to do too much. You'll overload the circuits.

This caution has been most clearly stated by Florida education commissioner Ralph Turlington, who finds himself trying to dig out of a blizzard of school reforms initiated by the governor and state legislature. "We need more time to chew what we already have bitten off," he warned Florida policymakers in May 1984. "We are traveling," he remarked somewhat cryptically, "faster than we can travel," and went on to urge that some timetables be stretched out, some deadlines eased, and some additional reform measures deferred.

Florida may be a special case, for Governor Graham and the legislature had in fact moved swiftly in 1983 and 1984 to make a number of sweeping changes—on top of others made in the years just before. The governor, it was said, wanted his state to be the first to enact a merit pay or career ladder plan for teachers—and he had his wish, though the speedily passed legislation left a lot of crucial details unresolved. In other states, policymakers have barely left the starting blocks and some of them appear to be in no hurry to get anywhere in particular. As a reporter for *Education Daily* summarized a February 1984 gathering in Denver: "State lawmakers should resist rushing headlong into school reform, no matter how attractive the goal, said legislators from 25 states."

We should bear in mind that the nation took the better part of two decades to batter and vandalize its schoolhouse, and the devastation cannot all be repaired overnight. Still, the damage is varied and extensive, while the edifice is large and complex. So it is naive to suppose that all can be set to rights within a reasonable timetable unless many repairs are made simultaneously. This will take a sizable crew of workers and a lot of hard labor, but above all it requires an overall plan and schedule—not just a solitary handyman puttering at one thing, then another.

8. Pressing children to learn more is not good for them.

For every educator who regards a child as a diamond-in-the-rough, needing to be sorted, cleaned, carefully shaped and polished in order to bring out its brightest glow and greatest value, there are ten who perceive children as flowers: fragile shoots, needing shelter, nutrients, sunlight, and lots of unhurried time in which to develop, to grow, and to unfold their beauty.

In truth, the child is surely a bit of both, and the total process by which he moves from infancy to adulthood must deal with this dualism. But when it comes to formal schooling, we must also understand that these two images of the child give rise to radically different policies and practices. The child-as-tender-bud conception has held sway in most of the education profession for a very long time, but the child-as-uncut-stone image underlies the contemporary excellence movement, which begins with the idea of standards that youngsters should be obliged to meet: knowledge they must assimilate, skills they must acquire, habits they must adopt, and so forth. Rewards of various kinds will follow them when these standards are achieved, and there will be some price paid for failure.

Why not make teaching a full-time job and compensate it accordingly?

That is what standards are all about. That, most people would quickly add, is also what life is all about and giving youngsters any different impression while they're in school does them no favor.

But platoons of educators and child developers think otherwise. They would shield youngsters from awareness that the race is to the swift; insulate them from competitiveness; protect them from anxiety; and delay as long as possible the realization that the world is full of goals and expectations, standards and requirements, rules and obligations, and situations where success results from a mixture of ability, effort, pluck, and luck.

School "should be concerned with the total development of the child, rather than dealing with them as if their minds were separate from their bodies," insists Alabama education dean Milly Cowles. "Children are not products. They are individuals who are different and who grow and learn at different speeds . . . " It would, in her view, be a grave error "to make every child conform to one artificial standard."

Introducing a special issue on "higher standards" of the journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, editor Ronald Brandt analogized the present push for greater educational rigor to a scene he had witnessed in Nigeria years earlier:

> Six little boys about nine or ten years old were sitting cross-legged in a row on the ground, holding their wooden slates. Their "mallam" was striding from one to another, hitting them on the head and shoulders with a rope. "Why is he doing that, Izaac?" I asked the driver. Izaac chuckled and answered, "He wants them to learn harder, sir."

But it was in the pages of the *Atlantic Monthly* a few months back that the standards-are-bad-for-children sermon was preached with maximum solemnity by the high priest of permissive child-rearing, none other than Benjamin Spock, M.D. The title and subtitle of his essay convey the flavor: "Coercion in the classroom won't work; learning by doing and sensitivity to feelings are the keys to academic progress." But that wasn't all. As we have come to expect from this redoubtable pediatrician, ideological semanticism also reared its head. Grades and academic standards were termed "authoritarian" and "coercive"; the alternative view—Spock's view—was termed "progressive" and "democratic." Need more be said?

We are also cautioned not to ignore the possibility that obliging youngsters to "learn harder" will cause more of them to quit school. "If you set up more rigorous requirements for graduation, inevitably you will increase the number of dropouts," predicts an education official in New Jersey. "One of the dangers inherent in all the recommendations for more demanding courses and higher standards," cautions Harold Howe, "is that these more rigorous requirements will be insensitively applied and will force more young people out of school altogether."

There is an obvious rejoinder: The drop-out rate has crept upward as school standards have declined. It's at least plausible that some youngsters left school because it seemed to them trivial and pointless. Or, as an education adviser to the president of the Florida State Senate noted, explaining the reasoning that led that legislature to raise high-school graduation requirements: "We were aware of the problem of increased dropouts. But one of the significant points that was made was that many dropouts left because they were bored with taking

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too many cafeteria-style courses . . . "

9. All this emphasis on academic learning cuts down on other subjects.

This contention is another sign of the factionalism and interest group politics *within* education. It is not so very different from the self-interested claims and assertions made by teacher unions and colleges of education except that in this case it is framed in terms of what is good for children. "As we increase math and science as a result of the addition of high technology and computer literacy to the curriculum," observes Paul Lindsey, associate commissioner of education in Texas, "it has a tremendous [negative] effect on our ability to provide vocational education." "With such a heavy emphasis on science and math," asks NEA president Mary Futrell, "where will our writers, poets, artists and musicians come from?" The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development resolved at its 1984 meeting that while there was nothing wrong with math, science, English, and foreign-language study, "schools and school districts cannot neglect those areas of the curriculum encompassing the arts, music, vocational offerings, and extracurricular programs designed to meet the developmental needs of students."

It is not surprising that old-line progressive educators, concerned with such things as "affective" and "developmental" education, find fault with a heavy emphasis on academic learning and cognitive skills. Nor ought we be amazed that the teachers of peripheral subjects will defend their own niches in the curricular wall against those who would fill them with more history or geometry. But if the major education critiques of the past several years agree on anything, they agree that the curriculum has become too diffuse and the standards too slack, and that reform means clearing some of the underbrush. If every curricular weed successfully resists being uprooted, the educational landscape will gain neither discipline nor beauty.

10. *Educational standards are discriminatory and unjust.*

Here we come to the heart of the matter, to the Golden Temple of the resistance, to what Nathan Glazer terms "the most serious challenge to the effort to raise the quality of American education," and to the objection that wields the heaviest moral and political clout. It can be phrased fancily, but let me state it simply: A lot of people contend that higher educational standards are bad for blacks, Hispanics, and certain other minority groups. (Not all "minorities," mind you. I have yet to hear anyone predict that stiffening graduation requirements or testing teachers would wreak havoc among Americans of Chinese, Irish, or Jewish descent.)

It does no good to point out that the nastiest of all forms of subtle racism is the suggestion that members of some groups simply cannot be expected to do as well as others and must therefore be held to lower standards—or to none at all. Of course, if there are no meaningful standards for anybody, this problem does not arise; we simply get the by-now-familiar alternative problem, a slack and mediocre educational system for everyone (save for those individuals, of whatever race or heritage, with inner demons that prod them to excel).

The absence of uniform performance standards is closely associated with what is known in education circles as the quest for "equity." (It used to be known as "equality of educational opportunity," but a decade or so back that phrase lost favor with those who demanded equality of results among groups instead of merely the chance for every individual to do his best.)

Education's "equity agenda" has much to do with participation and completion rates, i.e., with the outward manifestations of educational success, but it has very little to do with how much people actually learn. It also emphasizes special services, programs, and outlays on behalf of groups defined according to one or another need, incapacity, or distinctive circumstance. In fact, its salient characteristic is its preoccupation with groups and subgroups within the population. Thus it is not altogether surprising that a serious push for uniform high standards for everybody, standards to be applied to all individuals regardless of their group characteristics, would alarm the ideologues of equity and would worry leaders of some of the groups that have profited from special treatment.

"With such a heavy emphasis on science and math," asks NEA president Mary Futrell, "where will our writers, poets, artists and musicians come from?"

Yet the authors of the various school critiques and commission reports of the past several years actually went out of their way to anticipate and parry any charges of "elitism." The National Commission explicitly denied "that a public commitment to excellence and educational reform must be made at the expense of a strong public commitment to the equitable treatment of our diverse population." The Task Force on Education for Economic Growth insisted that "we must improve the quality of instruction of all students—not just for an elite, but for all." The panel convened by the Twentieth Century Fund optimistically asserted that "the skills that were once possessed by only a few must now be held by the many." The Paideia Group echoed Robert Maynard Hutchins's famous conclusion that "the best education for the best is the best education for all." The solo authors—Boyer, Goodlad, and Sizer—were even more insistent that schooling be strengthened for *all* youngsters. In Boyer's words, "To expand access without upgrading schools is simply to perpetuate discrimination in a more subtle form. But to push for excellence in ways that ignore the needs of less privileged students is to undermine the future of the nation. Clearly, equity and excellence cannot be divided."

Nor did these noble phrases lead to policy proposals designed to benefit the few. The actual steps taken by state and local governments, almost without exception, have been egalitarian and universalistic, designed to raise the educational floor under everyone, not to strengthen the schools of the elite while ignoring the educations of the mass.

Yet consider some of the responses:

At a meeting of the World Future Society, according to an education news service, Sarah Melendez of the American Council on Education said that "colleges and universities must increase their access rather than their admissions standards. . . . She called for open admissions policies at postsecondary institutions."

Journalist Carl Rowan writes that "the elitists say America doesn't need so many blacks in colleges and universities, which they think belong to and always were intended for the superior and privileged classes."

Harvard education professor Charles Willie writes that "elitism has taken over where racism and sexism left off and is performing some of the racist and sexist 'dirty work' under the banner of maintaining high standards." He suggests—in phrases one might expect to encounter in South Africa—that "there is nothing wrong with differentiating populations into dominant and subdominant groups so that the special needs of each group may be addressed appropriately." Since in his view there is a permanent tension between the "thesis" of "excellence" and the antithesis "that people with mediocre skills should be included," he predicts that the "synthesis and the goal of our schools" will be "adequacy," an aspiration which, he insists, "is good enough."

Iowa education professor James Albrecht concludes that the National Commission's emphasis on academic learning "will only hasten the disenfranchisement of the inarticulate, those whose children are already unsuccessful and demoralized in our schools."

Finally, there is the allegation that *any* kind of uniformity is un-American. At a colloquium on the National Commission report, held at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in late 1983, one of the graduate student "respondents" to Commission executive director Milton Goldberg characterized the report as "an attack on pluralistic, multicultural sensitivity." (The Twentieth Century Fund task force has come in for even more abuse from the multicultural crowd because of its straightforward assertion that "the most important objective of elementary and secondary education in

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the United States is the development of literacy in the English language.")

It is the sad fact that some minority groups *have* been experiencing distressingly high failure rates on various tests being employed by states and localities to enforce educational standards. A majority of black and Hispanic ninth graders in Montgomery County, Maryland failed the state mathematics competency exam in 1983 (compared with 30 percent of white youngsters and 23 percent of Asians). Fifty-seven percent of the Florida students failing the state's high-school competency exam in 1983 were black (though just 20 percent of the students in that state are black). Since the inception of minimum cut-off scores for persons seeking certification to teach school in Louisiana, just 15 percent of the black students graduating from that state's public colleges and universities who took the National Teachers Exam achieved passing scores on it.

This is not an insignificant problem, and it deserves a solution. But which kind? Some simply demand that the tests are themselves the problem and that they must be revised until they yield "equal outcomes." "The scores of black and white students on the standardized tests must be equivalent," insists Detroit's school superintendent. On the other hand, the "traditionally black" colleges of Virginia, anticipating a high failure rate for their graduates when the Old Dominion imposes a cut-off score for new teachers next year, decided to roll up their sleeves and create special courses drilling students in such problem areas as critical-thinking skills. "We are past decrying the fact that the test is culturally biased," said the education dean of Hampton Institute. "It's a requirement and let's face it. . . . It's going to be with us for a long time, and our students have to pass it along with everyone else's."

Others, less bold or confident, are inclined to set multiple standards, especially for such things as high-school graduation requirements. Sometimes, however, that approach has greater appeal for the "experts" than for those directly affected.

In New York this past year, the Board of Regents stiffened its high-school exit requirements for all students—but over the protests of Kenneth Clark it retained its pattern of two separate tracks, one leading to the celebrated "Regents' Diploma," the other to a less prestigious "local" certificate. Even so, the Board was talked out of some of its most exacting proposals by education groups alleging that these were unfair to "disadvantaged" and "non-college" youngsters. Among the modifications was a major concession to vocational educators and other professional groups alarmed by the Regents' initial plan to expand the "academic" requirements so substantially as to leave scant room for non-academic courses. But the assertion that such an expansion was detrimental to "inner city" youngsters prompted a telling rejoinder from a community group in Brooklyn. "You are saying," argued Rose Marie Hernandez on behalf of the United Community Centers, "that the rigorous academic program is fine for Scarsdale, but children from communities like East New York can't handle that kind of work. We disagree; we think it is the responsibility of the public schools and the Board of Regents to make sure that all children in New York State are educated to the level accomplished by the children in communities like Scarsdale." No "subdominant" status would do for the residents of Brooklyn!

There is a considerable irony here, though it is not unfamiliar. The closer one gets to the realities of life as experienced by ordinary *members* of minority groups, inner city residents, and poor people, the clearer it becomes that they understand the importance of high standards, that they expect their children to be held to such standards along with everyone else, and that they are determined that their children will succeed. It is when one listens to university professors, the spokesmen for national interest groups, and others—themselves securely in the upper middle class—who purport to be tending the welfare of the disadvantaged that one hears that "adequacy is good enough" and that the "inarticulate" will be "disenfranchised" by increased academic rigor.

Still, the moral suasion and political leverage exerted by a cleverly-stated argument on behalf of "equity" are substantial. And it is the regrettable fact that a great many educators—and elected officials who pander to them—have persuaded themselves that "equity" and "excellence" are antonyms, that "higher standards" is an upper class white male code for invidious discrimination, and that we should therefore either abolish standards entirely or steel ourselves to the fact that some groups cannot attain them. You have to go to East New York to be reminded that this last alternative is the most condescending and elitist of all.

Quarrels within the Ranks.

The popularity of the ten heresies noted above, particularly among the congregants and theologians of the education profession itself, poses a substantial threat to the simple ancient faith in high quality teaching and systematic learning of worthwhile knowledge and important skills. The keepers of that faith are not defenseless, to be sure, for they have a huge number of followers within the ranks of the general populace, and at present they also have many influential adherents.

But all is not harmonious within the vestry of the excellence movement, either. The friends of educational quality are not invariably friends of each other. They enter into alliances of convenience around one issue or goal that quickly dissolve into hostility over others. They engage in doctrinal disputes. They argue over strategy. And some of them are easily duped.

Let me briefly sketch five of the most vexing tensions *within* the ranks of the reformers.

First, ideological schisms, of which the most serious is the conflict between education-as-transmitter-of-culture-and-nationhood and education-as-extension-of-family. This dispute parallels old and important arguments about the nature of society and the role of government, but its essence can be stated simply: Does excellent education mean the effective induction of all young Americans into a single society, polity, and culture by equipping them with essentially the same intellectual skills, core values, and knowledge? Or does it mean freeing individuals, families, and groups to establish and patronize their own schools, to set their own curricular priorities, and to impart their own values through means of their own choosing?

Second, the familiar hostility between incrementalists and revolutionaries. Educational excellence has its reformers and its radicals, and even when they agree about what the "ideal" would be they may quarrel fiercely over the best strategies for attaining it. One may be gratified when the principle of "merit" gains a toehold in the new teacher "career ladder" adopted by a city or state while another sees that as "window dressing" on a system that continues to employ mediocre teachers. Radicals—of both left and right—are queasy with marginal improvements that may mollify the discontented and thereby delay the "revolution." Incremental reformers, on the other hand, are tempted to settle for insignificant changes.

Third, idiosyncratic hangups and secondary agendas. Whenever a public policy train gets moving, all sorts of folks are apt to try to clamber aboard with their own favorite baggage. They are tempted to turn the quest for higher educational standards into a purge of "secular humanism" from the curriculum, into an occasion to bring teacher certification under the control of teacher unions, or into a scheme for selling more computers. Such opportunism is not inherently reprehensible. But if unchecked it is apt both to worsen the rivalries within the excellence movement and to leave the schools with a fresh set of "special interests," "categorical programs," and impracticable assignments just as burdensome as the old ones that the excellence movement set out to clear away.

Fourth, dissent over who is responsible for what, especially fierce battling over the proper role of the federal government in the quest for higher educational standards. This is not the place for a full examination of the complexities and disagreements that snarl any serious attempt to apportion responsibility for sound educational policymaking and financing among the three major levels of government, between the public and private sectors, between professionals and laymen, or between schools and parents. Suffice it to say that people who may concur completely about what children ought to learn and what qualifications ought to be expected of teachers may come

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to blows when they try to determine where the authority to set these standards should reside and on whose shoulders the burden of paying for school improvements should rest.

Fifth, premature declarations of success. Several times in recent months, I have been reminded of former Senator Aiken's infamous advice about how the United States could bring its Vietnam involvement to a rapid conclusion. "Let's just call the war won," he said "and go home." Today's education reformers are tempted to mistake words for action, activity for accomplishment, and enthusiasm for results. It matters little whether this is willful self-delusion, as Senator Aiken appeared to urge, or the unwarranted conclusion that others have come genuinely to share one's views and have actually transformed their shabby old practices.

American education is a sprawling, decentralized enterprise with immense momentum—or, if you prefer, inertia—of its own. Turning it is like rerouting a herd of dinosaurs. (Admiral Rickover has compared the exercise to moving a graveyard.) Shouting new instructions cannot be assumed to affect the beasts' course. Possibly the single biggest risk that the "excellence movement" faces is the unwarranted conclusion that it has succeeded.

This is not an imaginary concern. Observe how the Department of Education has already trumpeted the impact of the National Commission. In May 1984, a scant year after publication of the commission's report, *A Nation at Risk,* Secretary Bell presented President Reagan and the commission members with a 229-page volume entitled *The Nation Responds.* The next day, in his weekly radio broadcast, the President announced that "we have met the rising tide of mediocrity with a tidal wave of school reforms."

Well, maybe. Judging from actual evidence set forth in *The Nation Responds,* it would be more accurate to say that there have been some decent waves, a lot of ripples, and a great many people standing on the shore yelling at the tide.

Under the heading of "curriculum reform," for example, Secretary Bell asserted that 22 states had "approved" initiatives and that 23 more had "proposed" them. Leave aside the obvious fact that all these claims were based on states' own assertions of what they had done, and that the state officials queried were apt to put the best possible face on their activities. Just see what the Department of Education listed as "approved initiatives." Indiana reported that its legislature had "enacted a program to reduce the teacher/student ratio in grades K-3 to 18 students over the next four years." This may or may not be a good thing to do, but it has precious little to do with "curriculum." Iowa asserted that its "high school physics curriculum has been revised to make it more applicable to the needs of Iowa students." What on earth does that mean? Montana said that its "Office of Public Instruction is working with elementary and secondary schools to identify course content." A number of states indicated more substantial and specific changes in curriculum. But a lot of tinsel accompanies the real ornaments.

I do not suggest that the Education Department is intentionally deceiving us or that the states have fraudulently represented their actions to date. Rather, I suspect, the understandable desire of Secretary Bell and the commission staff to prove that they've had a profound impact (and, just possibly, the election-year impulse of the White House to garner some credit for itself) leads to hyperbole. This would not be so bad if resistance to the "excellence movement" were abating and if education professionals were embracing its goals as their own. But over the Fourth of July weekend the National Education Association again vowed massive resistance to anything resembling higher standards for teachers, peer review of classroom performance, merit-based pay, or career ladders. (Instead, the NEA suggested a huge across-the-board salary increase.)

Since they cannot count on passing the flame to other runners, then, the leaders of the excellence movement need to grit their teeth, pump their arms, and settle in for a long uphill pull. That is why premature victory parties are so dangerous. So long as the resistance senses that the foreign troops will soon withdraw, who cares whether they first persuade themselves that they have won a great victory? Encouraging them to think so may even hasten their departure. That is certainly how Senator Aiken reasoned. And in surprisingly short order, control of all provinces will revert to the indigenous forces.

The Inherent Difficulties

The blunt fact is that even if the excellence movement remains on the battlefield for several more years, even if the governors and business leaders stay vigorous, even if the newspapers keep watching and the resistance fades, three practical problems persist that would be very difficult to solve under the best of circumstances.

First, the sorry state of teacher quality. Roughly a million of the 2.2 million people who will be teaching in our schools in 1990 are not teaching there today. The turnover in teacher ranks during the balance of this decade will be enormous. Yet if present trends continue, most of those new teachers will be less able and less well educated than the veterans they replace. Most will be drawn from the bottom third of their classes at the least demanding colleges in the land. Most will be the products of undergraduate teacher training programs. Some will be terrific in the classroom and a number will be satisfactory, but many will be people without the ability or motivation to get a better-paid, higher-status job. And this threatens to become a self-reinforcing process: If we are, as I fear, heading into the first era in American history when the average parent looking at his child's teacher sees a person who is less intelligent and less well educated than the parent himself, then this occupation will continue to fall in public esteem, and the individuals it "attracts" to its ranks will be people oblivious to such considerations.

Making new teachers pass tests will not alone rectify this situation. Neither will salary increases. Nor breaking the stranglehold of the colleges of education. The systematic reconstruction of the teaching occupation into an honorable, gratifying, and high-status profession providing full-time work to able individuals who impose "quality control" on their own colleagues would be a long, arduous, and far-from-certain undertaking even if no one were opposed. It is also the one reform without which all others can be expected to falter.

Second, the politics of failure. I refer not to professional Cassandras who revel in disaster and are discomforted by progress, but rather to the political risks of enforcing standards by which large numbers of children are made to repeat subjects, are denied their diplomas, or are barred from the colleges of their choice by virtue of low grades, test scores, or whatever.

The problem with enforcing standards is not that failure is immoral, unjust, or evil but that if it is widespread it will cause all manner of managerial dilemmas, administrative snarls, and political pressures. How much failure can the policy machinery of a free society handle before people conclude that the standards that produced it are too high? Abolishing "social promotion" is a lot more attractive in the abstract than when one's own child is told to repeat fourth grade.

Third, the dearth of reliable mechanisms to maintain public pressure for better schools. If there is any message to be derived from the populist character of the excellence movement, it is that education is too important to be left to the educators. Though we have always had the illusion of "civilian control" of schools and schooling, in truth a lot of the damage of recent decades can be traced to an informal alliance between interest groups that sought to bend the educational system to their particular purposes and professional educators who were willing enough to collaborate. The "public interest" in high quality schools for everyone had few spokesmen, leaders, or influential friends. That situation has dramatically altered in the past two years. But if we are not to look back on 1983 and 1984 as a temporary phenomenon, a short-lived ray of sun through a permanently overcast sky, we need organizational and institutional mechanisms that do not now exist. Mediocrity in American education has a large and resilient infrastructure of its own. Excellence, I fear, today has nothing of the sort. □

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NUTS AND BOLTS OF THE EXCELLENCE MOVEMENT

Lessons and lectures from around the nation.

JOSEPH ADELSON

Among its many other distinctions, Ann Arbor, Michigan is the site of a great research university; ranks first nationally in book sales per capita, and circulates more books through its public library than any community in the state, including Detroit; is reputed to have the largest number of psychotherapists for its population in the nation; has a City Council which debates whether to debate American policy in Central America; and has a daily newspaper which provides a great many alarming and memorable items for this journal's Current Wisdom page. It is, in short, a key American habitat of the New Class, and likely more deeply saturated in that ethos than any city between Cambridge, Massachusetts and Berkeley, California. It is also the habitat of a great many ordinary citizens, mostly middle-class and often prosperous, who by no means share New Class aspirations for themselves or their children. These opposing inclinations are evenly balanced. At the moment the Council is narrowly Republican. The school board has recently tilted in the liberal direction, but it will likely tilt again when the conservatives decide, as they did in the recent past, that enough is enough.

As you might expect, these values tend to collide with particular intensity in the domain of education. The passionate arguments about schooling tend not to be about money; even when they seem to be about money, they really are not—they are about "educational philosophy," which usually turns out to mean current fashions in injustice. And that turns out to mean, in practice, that matters are rarely simple, since almost any issue may turn out to be heavy with ideological meaning.

A current example: The school administration thought it might be a good time—in view of the national yearning for excellence in education—to raise the requirements for high-school graduation. The proposals made were modest ones—little more than decreasing the number of junk elective courses and increasing some of the requirements in science. Yet there was an immediate hullabaloo, in part because—so it was said—the proposals had come from the administration, and not from "the community," in part because to raise standards is "elitist." The administrators shrugged their shoulders—they are seasoned veterans of the Ann Arbor scene—and in the fullness of time a 43-member committee—consisting of anyone mildly interested and remotely sentient—was deputed to redo the secondary curriculum.

Apparently there will be an effort to reinvent the wheel, in that an inventory of expected "common learnings" will be developed, and only then will a curriculum revision be proposed. Hence, between the size and diversity of the committee, and the exalted nature of the task it has set itself, one may not see an early change in graduation standards. Nor should one bet that those standards will be lifted dramatically, since one senses that an underlying aim of the exercise is a kind of damage control, to make sure that the reform goals are not fully met. Why should that be? Because the raising of standards—or so it is argued—will also raise the dropout rate, which in turn (and this is said euphemistically) affects the blacks.

Objectively speaking, the educational problems of blacks are certainly far less acute in Ann Arbor than in most other small cities, there being a substantial number of well-educated black families. Yet one would not think so from reading the paper, which prints without comment or analysis a variety of venomous accusations made against the schools, depicting teachers and administration as incompetent, cynical, callous, and bigoted. To anyone who knows any number of Ann Arbor teachers, these charges are simply lunatic, since the spectrum of political beliefs among the staff ranges from earnestly liberal to militantly left. The current school administration (now outgoing on the retirement of the superintendent) is in fact very capable, and was able to rescue a school system which had been nearly wrecked by an antically "progressive" regime, about which the less said the better. Yet it seems able to do very little in its own defense, aside from saying that they are trying their best, or that the problem is complex. One suspects they have just given up trying to cope with ideological educational politics. The strategy seems to be to stare into space, hoping the topic will go away. As the Democratic primary campaign has shown us, this has become the conventional way that the liberal press and leadership deal with charges of racism, no matter how absurd.

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JAMES C. CARPER

Since the mid-1960s, evangelical Protestants and their churches, few of which are affiliated with mainline denominations, have been founding Christian day schools at an unprecedented rate. The growth of these institutions, though more robust in the West and the South, is clearly a national phenomenon. Not only do these schools currently constitute the most rapidly expanding segment of formal education in the United States, but they also represent the first *widespread* secession from the public school pattern since the establishment of Catholic schools in the nineteenth century.

Due to the unorganized, grassroots growth of the Christian day schools and the refusal of some of these institutions either to join one of the national Christian school associations or to report enrollment figures to government agencies, there is considerable variation in the estimates of the number of schools and their enrollment. On the basis of the best available data, however, it seems reasonable to estimate that between 8,000 and 10,000 of these schools have been established during the last twenty years, with a current student population of approximately 1,000,000 (kindergarten through 12th grade).

Why are many conservative Protestants forsaking their historic commitment to public education and seeking academic and moral excellence in alter-

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native schools? One factor is the evangelicals' growing sense of alienation from the American social order. To them, public education exemplifies trends which they deplore in the society at large: widespread uncertainty concerning sources of authority, dissolution of standards, waning of evangelicalism as a culture-shaping force, scientism, and government social engineering. Thus, when evangelicals establish and support Christian day schools, which emphasize the Bible, moral absolutes, basic subject matter mastery, discipline, and varying degrees of separation from contemporary culture, they are expressing not only profound dissatisfaction with the normative void in public education, unsatisfactory behavioral and academic standards, and education decision-making by agencies and individuals not accountable to the public, but also disillusionment with the society which sustains the public school enterprise.

A sense of awakening has also contributed to the proliferation of these schools. A recrudescent evangelical consciousness—one manifestation of the spiritual ferment of the past twenty years which historian William G. McLoughlin has called the "Fourth Great Awakening"—has prompted a growing number of evangelicals to promote Christian education beyond the home and marginally effective efforts of the Sunday school. By embracing the Christian day school, they believe they have fashioned a configuration of education in which all components are engaged in their conception of the scriptural command to "train up a child in the way he should go."

Regardless of any improvement in public education which may result from recent reform strategies, it is not likely that many evangelicals will return their children to the public schools. Most of them report a high degree of satisfaction with the education offered by Christian day schools. Nevertheless, these institutions may prove beneficial to public education and current reform efforts. Small (enrollment averages about 150), unencumbered by bureaucratic structures, populated by committed individuals, and still relatively free from state prescriptions for "quality education," these schools attempt with varying degrees of success to integrate the Christian faith with every element of school life. Such an ethos provides a shared sense of mission and common values which research suggests are characteristic of "effective schools." Perhaps these islands of shared belief and commitment will demonstrate that in the quest for excellence in education, reform efforts which rely on the values of voluntarism, community, and decentralization will be more likely to bear fruit than those which depend on bureaucratic edict.

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DENIS P. DOYLE

No reform proposal that cuts across the grain of the establishment can be all bad. At least that is how I view the brain children of one of the most inventive education "policy makers" in the nation, Jack Gordon. Chairman of the Florida Senate Education Committee, Gordon is a liberal democrat. As former head of Florida's "Democrats for Cranston" he is not, in the abstract, the most likely person to push for tough-minded education reform. So much for abstractions.

Gordon may be liberal but he is old-fashioned about education, and recent legislation he has sponsored raises very interesting issues about means and ends, centralization versus decentralization, and the role of elites in establishing education policy. In short, Gordon's ideas raise questions of principle; they are not just instrumental quick fixes. That is why anyone who cares about education reform should keep an eye on him.

His most recent idea is to form a "cartel for excellence," to force publishers to produce higher quality textbooks. There is no question the idea could be made to work—there are few organizations in American life as responsive as textbook publishers, and if a "cartel for excellence" were ever formed the publishers would respond to it with the same alacrity with which they abandoned "sex role stereotyping." (Remember when they dropped Founding Fathers for Founders? At least they didn't try to foist Founding Fathers and Mothers on an unsuspecting nation.)

The cartel idea may be ahead of its time, however. A preliminary meeting of co-conspirators in Tallahassee, which included representatives from California, New York, and the U.S. Department of Education, attracted a good deal of favorable attention, but within a few days New York proceeded to get cold feet. And as any monopolist knows, a cartel which doesn't include the big boys will sink without a trace.

Closer to home, however, Gordon has pioneered one idea that has enormous promise, even if it does violate a principle that conservatives hold dear. He makes light of local control (and local discretion) in the name of improving writing. Now there is a tough choice, pitting valued principle against valued principle. Concerned that few high-school graduates in Florida any longer know how to write, Gordon hit on a novel idea: If teachers gave writing assignments, collected them, read them, graded them, and returned them students might master this arcane craft.

He began to make inquiries around the state. Not surprisingly, it turned out that writing as a required activity had all but disappeared. Enter Gordon's legislation. Any district that was willing to require its junior and senior English students to write 200 words a week (6,000 words a year) would get state funds to permit it to reduce the teaching load for teachers of writing from 150 to 100 students a semester. Voluntary. Simple. Prescriptive. It reminds one of Burke's comment that the study of law sharpens the mind by narrowing it.

Is one to applaud or assail the Gordon proposal? Which principle is preeminent? Is local control with low or no standards to be preferred to centralized control justified by academic rigor? The danger, of course, is not just narrow but parochial prescriptiveness. Who gets to prescribe? Will tomorrow's reformers be as discerning as Gordon? Yesterday's most certainly were not. They were the same crew that consolidated tens of thousands of school districts in the name of chimerical economies of scale and introduced such worthy activities as compulsory observance of Arbor Day, Susan B. Anthony Day, and driver's education. Nevertheless, intellectual righteousness is hard to oppose, particularly when its opposite is an abstract principle. Indeed, how could a writer oppose so virtuous an idea? Gordon, no doubt, had that in mind when he was counting his votes. And if the idea embodies the wrong principle, it is more than a fine bit of irony: It is poetic justice.

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GREGORY A. FOSSEDAL

The conviction seems to be growing that if the education system doesn't work, you have to change the whole system. If indeed "Johnny can't read," the Heritage Foundation's Herb Berkowitz wrote in 1981, "cherchez le monopoly." The monopoly is today's public school system, a system on which most must rely, yet which fails to provide options for the consumer and incentives for the producer. The obvious answer is an injection of choice: vouchers, tax credits, magnet schools, or some variant thereof. Give an education bureaucrat a list of suggestions—for merit pay, stricter standards, greater parental involvement, classroom discipline, a return to the basics—and you will get back a list of platitudes and excuses. Give him more competition, namely private and parochial alternatives suddenly available to all parents, and you will concentrate his mind wonderfully.

Like any bold innovation, calls for consumer choice invite a thousand operational cavils, particularly from a large class of elites with a vested interest in the status quo. Until recently, voucher and tax credit advocates were hard-pressed to answer such nabobs by what they thought was an absence of any state or local experimentation with the idea. A pair of recent papers, one by former Reagan aide John McLaughry for the Reason Foundation, the other by the American Enterprise Institute's Denis Doyle, aptly sets the record straight. There is, in fact, a rich history of experimentation with the education free market, a history being carried on today with successful systems in Vermont, British Columbia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Australia.

Vermont has provided notable options for a rural state, in part because parents can receive help even for out-of-state tuition. St. Johnsbury, for example, has no official public school at all. Yet its 419 high-school age students can choose among several schools, the most popular being St. Johnsbury Academy. One St. Johnsbury student attended school in Connecticut. Even though it costs parents an extra $400 or more to send children to the Academy, an overwhelming majority do, and some 40 families from outside

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the district send children there. Town to town, the results vary, but overall, the system is "remarkably flexible," McLaughry reports.

Comparative data on the performance of different state systems are excruciatingly hard to come by. What sparse data there are, though, suggest Vermont's system is a smashing success. A 1983 release of state-by-state performance on the Scholastic Aptitude Test placed Vermont third out of 22 states ranked. The 28 states that did not release data had too few college-bound students to provide meaningful comparison, so one can infer that in practice Vermont ranks third or close to it among the 50 states. This holds even though Vermont spends little more ($2,763 per student) than the national average ($2,724 per student) on education. It spends far less than such neighboring states as New York ($4,280) and Connecticut ($3,189), both of which trail Vermont on the SAT rankings. Interestingly, the one state emulating the Vermont miracle is New Hampshire, ranked number one in SAT scores yet spending only $2,500 per student. New Hampshire, like Vermont, has one of the highest percentages of private school students of any state in the nation. (If those two statistics—lots of private students, yet low spending levels per student—seem at odds, it is only because the myth of private schools rolling in dough is, well, a myth. On average, public schools spend more than twice per student what private schools do, with *less* impressive results.) And while New Hampshire has no voucher or tax credit to aid private schools, its rural districts often allow a choice between nearby public schools, recognizing that arbitrary district boundaries may impose transportation hardships. It would seem that choice does more for learning than dollars do.

International numbers are still harder to come by. But studies conducted in 1964 and 1970 ranked Denmark, the Netherlands, and Australia, countries with varying consumer choice, all well above the United States in student performance on standardized tests. Waiving the usual statistical caveats about test scores, cultures, and the like, we find a typical Dutch high-school senior thrashing his American counterpart in math, 46 to 20; science, 39 to 23; and reading comprehension, 58 to 40.

In the U.S., two chief arguments against education choice are that it would subsidize religion and, of course, "help the rich." Ironically, value neutrality and economic equity have played the same important role in Australia, but in just the opposite way. Aid to the largely Roman Catholic system there is seen as a means of keeping the state out of religion; the financial burden on atheists is the same as on Christians, Jews, or Moslems. As for fairness, state aid for the Catholic schools is seen as an act of compassion, as they endure smaller facilities and fewer teachers per student. The Catholic system is indeed considered inferior, even though its students perform about the same as public school students.

What is indisputable, and more important, is that choice has helped both systems, public and private, improve. John Steinle, head of the South Australian Schools, reports a number of education innovations spreading from private to public sector, in effect forced on the latter by the pressure of competition. Public schools, for example, now have an open enrollment policy designed to encourage the diversity offered on the private side.

Still: What if all the numbers and performance statistics turn out to be a wash? What if a diverse system is no better at teaching students how to integrate an equation or interpret an essay by Samuel Johnson? In that case, as Denis Doyle eloquently argues, there is still a strong rationale for choice:

> Why do we educate children at all? The answer is deceptively simple—it is to transmit values, to maintain a living culture. In a vast continental democracy, there are competing values, particularly in a pluralistic and heterogenous society. But there are also non-competing values: openness, toleration, acceptance of differences, and democratic decision-making. . . . How, then, is the democratic tradition of toleration of competing ideas reconciled to the notion that about some matters agnosticism is not expected? . . . The lesson offered by our friends and allies is that choice is important precisely because values are important to education, and that some synthetic values will not suffice.

Gregory A. Fossedal is an editorial page writer at the Wall Street Journal.

MARY FUTRELL

There are no shortcuts to excellence.

In the national debate on education now underway, many voices have been raised. All call for reform and improvement in education. But, sadly, too few have advocated providing the resources necessary to achieve the desired results.

We hear cries for improvement but see suggestions so simplistic as to be useless in the battle to make real improvement—so-called "competency" tests for teachers, lengthened school days and years, "merit pay" plans that amount to nothing more than one-time payments for a handful of educators.

The fallacies in these approaches are obvious. "Merit" plans won't do anything at all to attract top students into our classrooms. These plans are also insulting to the profession, implying as they do that teachers must be bribed to work harder. In fact, teachers and other education personnel already work long and hard. What is needed are salary levels high enough to attract the top students into teaching and to keep the finest teachers in the classroom.

To put it bluntly, no one goes into teaching or any other education position expecting to become rich. But teachers do expect—and deserve—a decent paycheck, not a passport to near-poverty.

Simply lengthening the school day or year won't help much either. We need to improve curricula, obtain and maintain the finest teachers, provide basic materials and equipment, and give students support and encouragement at home. We must do all of this to make a real difference.

"Competency" tests for teachers are, at the moment, a politically popular educational "reform." But forcing teachers to take a single written test—or lose their job—is no way to ensure our children an outstanding teacher in every classroom. To reach that goal—NEA's goal—all teachers must be observed and evaluated on-the-job by trained and competent evaluators.

It sometimes surprises people to learn that NEA's 1,700,000 educator-members *want* evaluation systems. Of course we do! Regular evaluations are the only way to guarantee that there are competent and qualified teachers in every classroom in America.

But fewer than one-half of America's teachers are currently evaluated on an annual basis. It is tragic for education that so many teachers are *not* being evaluated. This situation is wrong, and it must be corrected.

Teachers aren't against tests. Teachers give tests all the time. But teachers do not rely on a single test to measure students' progress. We observe our students at work on a daily basis—and we want the same consideration for our own performance. We want to be carefully observed by trained observers.

You see, there's a great deal more to being a good teacher than simply knowing the subject matter. Many people who can diagram a sentence on paper cannot communicate ideas effectively to children.

It's not enough—not nearly enough—to simply *tell* young people what you want them to learn. As teachers, we have had to learn and practice the skills that will cause students to *want* to learn what we have to present.

Those who have put in the effort and the time to learn to become successful teachers can tell you that it's a lot easier just to do something yourself than to successfully cause 20 or 30 children to become proficient at it.

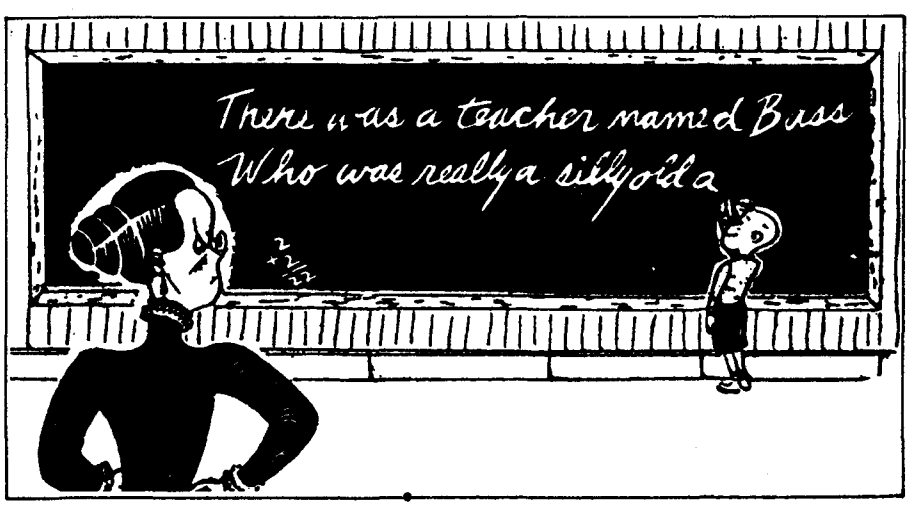
Laws that allow prospective teachers to sidestep instruction in the techniques of learning to teach actually harm, not help, our struggle to improve education. Such laws are simply one more simplistic shortcut that leads to trouble, not improvement.

The old saw about teaching was only half right. The truth is: Those who can, do. And those who can't should not have been hired and should not be kept. They have no place in teaching!

Mary Hatwood Futrell is president of the National Education Association.

PETER R. GREER

By all accounts, the Portland, Maine school system—consisting of 18 schools and 8,000 students—is a success story of American education. Its national-normed test scores are high, and the system has three national schools of excellence, a low drop-out rate, impressive college and job placements, and special programs for students of all abilities. Yet as a word of caution to those who see the route to excellence purely in isolated and definitive prescription, it is important to note that there is no simple explanation for Portland's success. Nor is that success necessarily permanent. Rather,



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over a period of nine years (yes, that long!) persistent effort has brought a wide variety of significant and complementary facets of the school system into place.

The gradual upgrading of the Portland system began in 1974 with the appointment of Superintendent Ron Raynolds. Raynolds tightened staff and administration hiring practices, and from his office came tougher evaluations of administrators and staff, relentless monitoring of all facets of the school system, a curriculum cycle of review and improvement, higher academic standards, and greater involvement of parents and other volunteers.

Over the years Portland began to support new ideas more aggressively. Advanced placement courses, language courses such as Russian and Chinese, and alternative courses for disaffected students were added. A teacher's academy and a liaison with Long Island University to retrain teachers to become math teachers were pursued. A testing expert was hired, with the result that test scores were understood and carefully worked on in the subsequent year with impressive results. Staff development based on the intellectual lives of teachers is now a priority. Graduates, staff, and citizenry are constantly questioned about how the school system can be improved.

Most importantly, though, from these concrete reforms in staff and curriculum there emerged an intangible change. Teacher morale rose considerably, and this new attitude proved infectious as the students showed an increasing willingness to learn.

Portland has worked hard to maintain this feeling in the schools. Positive reinforcement is given to everyone. There are the Superintendent's Awards, individual school awards, and a steady flow of letters and other recognition for "something extra" done by staff members.

A constant stream of positive newspaper articles has created good public feeling about the school system. Portland works hard at public relations, and community pride is such that the public school system now attracts students from local private and parochial schools.

As with anything so dependent on the intangible, though, Portland officials know that their success has to be earned over and over again. The system needs constant fine-tuning. Curriculum monitoring has to be done with more skill. More writing has to be assigned and corrected. Salaries are probably too low for the effort expended and challenges faced by the staff. More time must be spent with average and below average teachers, and more responsibility should be returned to principals who feel there is too much Central Office control.

Moreover the outside support from City Council and School Committees that the school system has always enjoyed must continue. The Portland citizenry has long been supportive of education. Indeed, during a three-year period of terrible budget and staff reductions, the School Committee refused to take the far easier and more educationally damaging route of eliminating positions on the basis of straight seniority. Rather, the Committee asked for evidence as to who was the most valuable to the students, with seniority as one respected factor.

But should that kind of diligent support cease, continued commitment to improvement will be jeopardized. That is the truth of education in Portland, where students, staff, parents, and government are all participating in the continuing drive for excellence.

Peter R. Greer is superintendent of the Portland, Maine Public Schools.

BILL HONIG

The California experience offers some helpful insights for those striving to improve educational quality in this country.

In 1982, a year before the major reform reports went public, the main themes of the excellence movement were addressed in the California campaign for State Superintendent of Public Instruction—raising academic and behavioral expectations for all students, increasing homework, and insisting that students take more English, literature, history, math, science, and fine arts. These ideas received strong public support in the November 1982 election.

During 1983, this electoral mandate was translated into a comprehensive reform strategy. The first and most important component of this overall strategy was to develop a commitment from local teachers, administrators, and board members to: institute a more rigorous instructional program for all of our students; improve student performance in reading, writing, speaking, analyzing, computing, and problem solving; increase students' understanding of their physical, social, political, and ethical worlds; and help our young people develop character and responsibility.

Key educators have also reached a consensus on the kind of instructional program which will best meet these goals. We are supporting changes which:

- Place renewed emphasis on sequenced instruction in the major disciplines.
- Increase the amount of assignments requiring writing, speaking, and problem solving.
- Encourage students to read more books, write more essays, and produce more reports.
- Raise the level of homework and the amount of instructional time.
- Improve school safety and student civility.

Secondly, based on the commitment of the educational community to improve quality at the local level, we devised a legislative package which passed in July 1983 to support the improvement efforts. This package combined structural reforms with substantial additional funds. The bill increased graduation requirements, lengthened school days and school years, tightened discipline, improved teacher selection, inaugurated an incentive program for top-flight teachers, streamlined dismissal procedures for incompetent teachers, and provided over $800 million of new money for schools.

Several factors contributed to the passage of the reform package: (1) the educational community took the initiative in advocating reforms, (2) the reforms were combined with funding, (3) we kept issues bipartisan, and (4) we organized support for the bill in each community in the state, and obtained intensive ethnic, business, and media advocacy for higher standards and funding.

The third leg of the strategy was a successful effort to acquire the $1.2 billion second-year funding for SB 813 by initiating a second major grassroots effort and to promulgate an accountability program on how progress will be measured. In the past two years, expenditures for students have increased nearly 20 percent or about $500 per child. On the accountability side, we have established specific numerical targets for the state for 1986, 1988, and 1990 which will include improvements in California assessment tests and SAT scores, increased enrollments in academic courses, decreased dropout rates, and additional amounts of writing and homework. We will also give each local school a profile to show its position in relationship to these goals and encourage school initiatives for improvement.

We are currently in the fourth phase of the overall improvement plan: a long-term effort to generate the professional technical support necessary to continue the momentum for change. We are working with key superintendents, teachers' organizations, educational groups, and citizens to establish:

1. An agreed-upon definition of curriculum; e.g., what should be a proper English sequence at the high-school level or what should we be teaching in fifth-grade U.S. History? Large numbers of educators are working to develop criteria for each curricula area. Under the reform legislation each district will review its instructional program against these model curricula.

2. Textbook selection procedures both at the state and local levels to reflect the instruction program we are pursuing and to make books more challenging and interesting.

3. A testing program which includes more history, science, and problem solving and derives from our definition of the curricula.

4. Selection and training of principals. In California, over one half of the 7,000 principals will be retiring in the next four to five years. We need site leaders with the proper educational vision, with the courage of their convictions, and the ability to get staffs to work in a common direction.

5. Improved teacher preparation. We have just launched a blue ribbon commission to develop a plan for recruiting, training, evaluating, and supporting the new generation of teachers in California. Currently we have approximately 160,000 teachers. By 1990, we will need over 100,000 new teachers, mostly at the elementary level.

6. Widespread teacher training. If we are serious about teaching science, math, history, English, fine arts, and

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foreign language, we need to organize widespread training for existing teachers.

7. A common concept of district effectiveness. What are the most effective measures boards and superintendents can take to improve the quality of education? We have defined accountability of principals, curriculum development, policy development, resource allocation, staff development, and other key leverage points and are organizing training of boards and staffs.

Finally, there are efforts to engage in cooperative measures with the business community, to solicit the help of parents, and to encourage students' responsibility in the education process.

I would hope that other states will not settle for only broad legislative and structural changes, but will also pursue the central issues of the quality of curriculum, teaching, and leadership at the local levels by creating a critical mass of professionals dedicated to excellence. Failure to do so might well abort the movement for educational excellence before it becomes imbedded in the day-to-day operation of the schools.

Bill Honig is California Superintendent of Public Instruction.

DAVID L. KIRP

It's hard not to root for Bill Honig, California's peripatetic superintendent of public instruction, as he sets out on what sometimes seems a one-man crusade to reform public education in the state.

Lord knows, reform is needed: For the better part of a decade, California has coasted on its reputation for educational excellence, even as it has let slip both standards and levels of financial support, moving from being one of the most generous states to one of the stingiest in school aid. Nor has there been much leadership from Sacramento: Honig's predecessor as superintendent had gotten bored with with his job, and it showed.

While Honig has some odd ideas—he has pushed longer school years, for instance, rather than prodding teachers and administrators to make better use of the considerable time they already have—his vision for reform is, for the most part, an attractive one. Honig aims to make public schools more rigorous places, even as he understands that intellectual ferment and cultural context, not the "back to basics" nostrums so widely peddled these days, is what rigor means. He is anxious to improve students' literacy and numeracy, as well as developing what in the current argot is called "critical thinking skills," but he acknowledges that unless the courses have real content—not standard textbook pap—those skills don't amount to much.

All this sounds like a distillation of the best of that bookshelf's worth of current reports on the state of American education. What makes the California story special is that Honig has turned himself into the Henry Barnard of our times, riding the circuit to preach the gospel.

To a remarkable extent, his message is being heard. Business leaders, concerned about the inability of high-school graduates to master alphabetical filing or read a mechanic's manual, have jumped on the bandwagon of educational standards. The state's universities, distressed that entering freshmen can't manage a Strunk and White sentence, have cheered the effort. That outside push, coupled with the help of key state legislators, has added nearly $2 billion to the schools budget in two years; in each of those years, a skeptical Republican Governor, George Deukmejian, has been forced to boost considerably the level of funding that he initially recommended.

Will any of this sound and fury signify? Superintendent Honig's new accountability standards will provide a useful measure—or, rather, multiple measures, for among the goals he has set are increased student enrollment in courses such as chemistry, calculus, and foreign languages, more required writing, fewer dropouts, and more students taking advanced placements.

The real enemy is inertia. Public schools have seen waves of reformers—and reforms—come and go. Indeed, Honig is battling against the effects of the 1960s school crusade, which enshrined cultural relativism and educational permissiveness. And exhortations don't quickly or automatically change students' performance, a lesson relearned when this year's state achievement tests showed, once again, that California's seniors are doing worse in reading, writing, and mathematics. □

David L. Kirp is professor at the School of Public Policy, University of California, Berkeley, and associate editor of the Sacramento Bee. *His books on education include* Just Schools *and* Educational Policy and the Law.

RITA KRAMER

For the past two decades the elementary schools have been doing too many things they should not be doing and, in the process, neglecting too much of what they should be doing.

Children between the ages of about six and eleven are in a relatively quiescent period between the rapid and often tumultuous growth of infancy and adolescence. These years are a developmental breathing spell, an opportunity for learning about the real world and building cognitive strengths to draw on later. Finding out how the physical world works and how we acquire that knowledge; explaining how the past has led to the present; and learning how to communicate ideas clearly and well should be the major educational goals of schools because these fit well with the developmental characteristics of children this age—relative distance from their inner emotional life and an increased curiosity about the outer world.

Ignoring these characteristics, teachers, school administrators, and educational policymakers have forgotten or perverted basic educational goals. The result is a generation of children who know how to multiply themselves but can't multiply numbers; who can chatter about nuclear politics but can't read Homer's poem about war; who can write slogans about the environment or feminism but can't write a good paragraph.

To some extent this is a result of too many hours spent in front of the television set, a problem for the family to deal with at home. But another factor that undercuts children's later ability to learn must be laid at the doorstep of the schools themselves, which overexcite and confuse children by introducing matters into the curriculum that are inappropriate because they are addressed to children who are too young to deal with them in a useful way, distracting both pupils and teachers, robbing them of the time and energy that should be devoted to learning the rudiments of science and mathematics and becoming acquainted with history and literature.

One instance is the "sex education" which goes beyond anatomy and biology to sexual attitudes and behavior. Another is the political activism that encourages "nuclear awareness" among children too young to understand the issues but old enough to be made anxious by the threat implied by the adults in their lives. A school-age child is not naturally preoccupied with the prospect of world war or nuclear holocaust; it has to be suggested to him. In doing so schools are not only assuming the functions of the family, they are doing away with childhood itself as a relatively tranquil time for learning.

Much of this might be corrected by getting rid of the Trojan horse of "social studies" and reintroducing the study of history. This would provide some needed perspective for the study of current events later, when students are better able to deal with the present by integrating it into their experience and their understanding of the past.

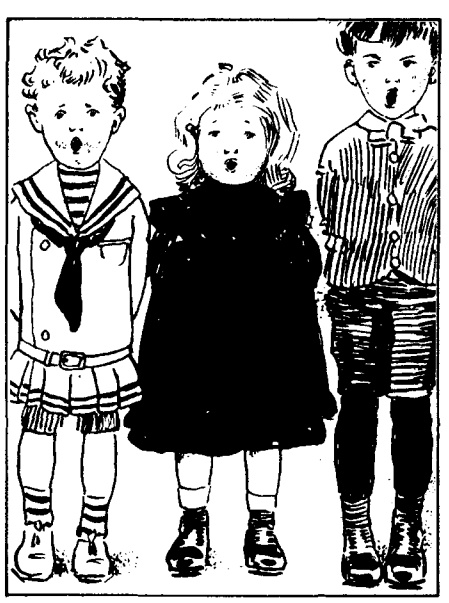
In the spring of 1983 the New York State Education Department proposed a new curriculum starting in grade 7 that would de-emphasize American and European history as such, substituting non-Western studies in order to replace "nationalism and ethnocentrism" with a "global perspective." The project was abandoned for the present, but the educators who believe that understanding the Declaration of Independence and the Civil War is of no unique importance to American children are still with us.

Who is going to teach these teachers that a curriculum that stresses learning to read by doing a lot of it—both in the history that explains their heritage and in the literature that illuminates their lives and suggests that human problems are not new—could equip the very young to profit from later educational opportunities far more effectively than lessons designed to mold right-thinking social attitudes?

Rita Kramer's most recent book is In Defense of the Family *(Basic Books).*

HERBERT I. LONDON

Since publication of the Club of Rome Report, *Limits to Growth,* in 1972,



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high-school social studies textbook and curricula materials have imbibed the lesson that environmental conditions are bad and getting worse; that a Malthusian scenario influences the relationship between population and food; that minerals will soon be depleted; that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. In short, that if dramatic conservation measures are not adopted immediately, the world will soon be doomed.

This apocalyptic vision of the future is presented in its most undiluted form in a National Education Association booklet published in 1980. Its author, Draper Kauffman, maintains that teachers should emphasize the "facts" that food production is losing the race with the population explosion, that economic development "is likely to prove a false hope to . . . the poor," that every demand on the environment represents the risk of causing the ecological system to collapse, and that the only hope is "a slow-to-no-growth" shift for the economy as a whole. This view, I should hastily note, is not presented as speculation or as an evocative hypothesis; it is the gospel according to the secular millenarians. Moreover, these positions can be found in various forms and to a greater or lesser extent in *every* major social studies textbook presently used at the high-school level.

In 1982 the Hudson Institute organized a program of study to balance the record of human accomplishment. I was asked to direct a group that would write a textbook, prepare a teachers' guidebook, and organize student activities that promote historical perspective, "critical mindedness," and balance in the social studies curriculum. The materials that emerged from our work emphasize the techniques and perspective futurists use, namely, seeking the best data available, analyzing trends, and using a macrocosmic view of history. University curriculum specialists and in-service secondary school teachers worked in collaboration with senior staff members from the Hudson Institute to develop these curriculum materials for a high-school-level audience.

Our work included a thorough review of existing materials and an examination of how related issues were treated by high-school textbooks. Experienced teachers were then interviewed to determine an appropriate pedagogy, competency-based instructional objectives were established, content areas were specified, and a set of draft materials was produced.

These draft materials, in the form of a student textbook, were subjected to a wide-scale field test during the 1982-3 school year. Approximately 2,500 students and 30 teachers utilized the Visions of the Future (VOF) text as the basis for a four-week unit of instruction at the onset. Participating students were surveyed at both the start and end of this period, and they revealed a strong move from pessimism toward a much more realistic—and hence more optimistic—view of the future. A control group that by contrast did not use the VOF text showed virtually no change of attitude during the same period.

After revision earlier this year, the VOF "complete package" now consists of an integrated student text/activities workbook, a teacher activities guide, a bank of test questions, and a student attitude survey instrument. The Visions textbook is currently being used by 15,000 students throughout the state of Arizona and another 10,000 students in Chicago, Indianapolis, Durham, Rockland and Westchester counties in New York, and Grand Rapids.

Critics maintain that this project is designed to spread optimism, that it is a form of proselytizing. If the criticism has validity it is only that realism in an ambiance of manic pessimism may appear to some as manic optimism. If in the process of using these materials students develop confidence and high morale instead of the usual despair, so be it. A little realism is a healthy antidote to the Chicken Little contention that the sky is falling.

Herbert I. London is dean of the Gallatin Division at New York University and director of the Visions of the Future project at the Hudson Institute. His most recent book is Why Are They Lying to Our Children? *(Stein and Day).*

WILLIAM MURCHISON

Ross Perot, on $1,000 of capital, had built a multi-billion dollar electronics corporation. He had tried to negotiate with the North Vietnamese for the release of American POWs. He had engineered the rescue of employees trapped in Iran after the Shah's overthrow. What could be so hard about reforming the Texas public school system?

Actually a lot was hard. But Perot, such is his personal dynamism, such his flair for attracting attention and getting things done, made the job look almost easy. Without him reform wouldn't have happened.

The fervor for reform swept Texas in the spring of 1983 after (1) the National Commission on Excellence in Education handed up its widely publicized indictment of American schools and (2) Gov. Mark White failed to make good on his campaign promise of a whopping pay raise for teachers.

White, a Democrat, named Perot, a Republican, to chair the Governor's Select Committee on Public Education (SCOPE). The governor could scarcely have known what he was bargaining for. Perot barnstormed the state, dive-bombing incompetent teachers, negligent parents, teacher colleges, vocational education, and even Texas public education's traditional worship of athletics. In the process of which he raised all sorts of hackles yet also got Texans talking seriously about education—something they hadn't done for decades.

SCOPE delivered its final report—a stirring call for root-and-branch reform—in April 1984. In early June, a special session of the legislature began considering the first educational reforms since 1949.

The scope of SCOPE's proposals was breathtaking. There were to be generous salary increases for teachers—and a career "ladder" to reward better teachers all the more generously. The finances of richer and poorer school districts would be equalized. For the children of the poor there would be special pre-kindergarten instruction. Student athletes would have to pass all, not just most, of their courses. The elected state school board would become appointive.

Nor was Perot content just to dump such a program in the legislature's lap. On his own he hired experienced Austin lobbyists to drum up votes. He said he would brook no compromise: He wanted the works.

Few of the legislature's resident cynics gave the Perot program much of a chance. Teacher unions and pro-family activists alike were sniping at him. The House Education Committee began by throwing out virtually everything. But at precisely that point, the much-underrated House speaker, Gib Lewis, a conservative, threw the immense power of his office behind Perot. The full House overwhelmingly undid the committee's act of sabotage.

The Senate, prodded by Lt. Gov. Bill Hobby, a moderate, likewise threw in with Perot. White himself, philosophically ambiguous and no favorite among legislators, lobbied more ardently than he ever had before. The SCOPE proposals passed almost intact.

Then, wonder of wonders, both houses sat down and passed the first general tax increase since 1971—$4.6 billion (the bulk for education, the rest for highways).

It was a remarkable achievement by any standards. It doesn't give Texas—yet—the nation's best schools. It does give beginning teachers a larger pay increase ($4,100) than any other state has so far tendered. It establishes the nation's juiciest incentives for teacher performance and the toughest academic standards for student athletes. It sets up the country's first statewide program for pre-kindergarten children. It gives hope for things to come.

"Literally," said one legislative opponent, half in admiration, "one man has said this has got to be done—and we did it."

Who can wonder that already people are talking about Ross Perot for governor in 1986?

William Murchison is associate editor of the Dallas Morning News.

JOE NATHAN

An unusual coalition gathered recently to support expansion of educational choices for low- and moderate-income families in Minnesota. The coalition builds on Minnesota's policy since 1955 of permitting taxpayers to deduct education expenses from their state income taxes. Minnesota's experience shows that extending choice need not destroy public education or wreak havoc with bonds holding society together, as some opponents hysterically insist.

Coalition members include rural and urban conservatives and liberals,

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blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and whites. They are supporting proposed legislation that would allow students from low- and moderate-income families to use state funds in choosing among public, private, and parochial schools.

In June 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Mueller* v. *Allen*) upheld the practice that for nearly thirty years has allowed Minnesotans to deduct a portion of educational expenses from their state income taxes. The Court said that the law is constitutional because parents of all school children are allowed to deduct education expenses.

Currently parents may deduct up to $500 for elementary students and $750 for secondary students. This will increase to $650 and $1,000 in 1985. Despite "gloom and doom rhetoric" from teachers' union officials around the country, this practice has not destroyed Minnesota public schools or produced a major exodus to private or parochial schools. Between 11 and 13 percent of Minnesota students have attended independent schools since the legislation was adopted, approximately equal to national percentages during the same period. In fact, according to U.S. Education Secretary Terrel Bell's 1983 figures, Minnesota's public high schools led the nation in graduation rate, and Minnesota students scored somewhat above the national average on standardized tests.

Nevertheless, teachers' union officials predicted disaster after the Supreme Court decision. Al Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, told *USA Today* that "I can't think of a worse decision—or a worse time for it to come." Too bad Shanker didn't bother to look at the facts in Minnesota. His theories about destruction of public education haven't come to pass.

This "don't bother me with facts" attitude has also characterized the reaction of many professional educators to newly proposed Minnesota legislation that would empower low-income parents to select from a variety of schools. The legislation was introduced by state representative John Brandl, an urban liberal from Minneapolis. Joining him were some rural, conservative legislators.

The bill had several features. It allowed families with incomes up to 130 percent of federal poverty guidelines to use funds allocated by the state to attend public or participating independent schools. If families elected to attend non-public schools, 80 percent of the state-allocated funds would follow them (approximately $1,500 for elementary students and $2,100 for secondary students). Participating non-public schools had to agree to the following guidelines: a) no admissions tests for students; b) admission on a racially non-discriminatory basis; c) lottery for admissions if more students applied than spots existed; d) acceptance of the state voucher as total payment for the school's tuition and fees; e) transportation provided within the student's district of attendance (i.e., within the city of St. Paul, or within the county whose borders correspond to the school district).

The bill brought a new group of people to testify at the legislature. Supporters included the director of the Minneapolis Urban League, director of the Minnesota Spanish Speaking Affairs Council, prominent Native Americans, and several public-school teachers and superintendents. Directors of the Community Action Programs throughout the state, who work daily with low income families, endorsed the legislation. It was opposed by the prominent education groups: teachers, administrators, and school boards.

While the voucher bill did not pass in the most recent session, supporters think time and momentum may be on their side. National polls over the last decade show an increasing amount of support for extending educational choices. A decade ago, less than 40 percent supported vouchers. During the last several years, Gallup found support increasing. By September 1983, 51 percent of Americans favored using tax funds to allow parents to select from among public, private, and parochial schools (and 63 percent of blacks supported the idea). A recent statewide Minnesota poll showed that almost 60 percent of Minnesota adults favored support to private schools, and that a clear majority of those who had an opinion favored both the general idea of using tax funds to support parents' educational preferences, and the proposed legislation allowing low- and moderate-income families to use tax funds to pay tuition at public, private, or parochial schools.

The Brandl bill produced other responses. The Minnesota commissioner of education testified that she favored allowing students to cross district lines to attend any public school in the state. The legislature passed a bill to allow 100 students around the state to attend other public schools if their needs for stimulation and challenge were not being met in the local district. While the number of students affected is miniscule, the law establishes the principle that choice and competition can be valuable in improving educational opportunity.

Liberty and choice are fundamental to the American dream and promise. Americans traditionally distrust monopoly. It's no surprise that unions and school boards, which hold a virtual monopoly on public funds (and on young people whose parents cannot afford affluent suburban, private, or parochial schools) oppose extending choice. It's rare for a person holding four aces to call for a new deal. But in Minnesota and elsewhere, an increasing number of people insist that the cards in public education are stacked against innovation, creativity, and performance. It will be fascinating to follow efforts to transform the game.

Joe Nathan is the author of Free to Teach *(Winston Press), a former public school teacher and administrator, and a member of a nonprofit research/advocacy organization, Public School Incentives, Inc., of St. Paul, Minnesota.*

MITCHELL B. PEARLSTEIN

In a year-plus of welcome prescriptions for improving American elementary and secondary education, perhaps the most important, albeit dampening, news has come out of Taiwan, Japan, and just across the Mississippi River from St. Paul.

Starting with the solid recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, every report of every national panel has emphasized the responsibility of schools and those who work in them to do better. Yet a close look at 1,440 first- and fifth-grade children and their parents in Taipei, Sendai, and Minneapolis suggests a corollary imperative that has been asserted weakly: the responsibility of students and their families to do better, too.

The head of the three-nation study, Prof. Harold W. Stevenson of the University of Michigan, concluded that "our national problem lies not only in American schools but in American homes." He wondered "how practical it is to push for educational reform," insofar as schools "can only respond to the needs expressed by the parents and citizens who pay for them."

It has been commonly known that students in Japan and a sizable number of other places, on average, devote more time to learning than students in this country. What has been recognized less well is that Americans, roughly speaking, fail to grasp adequately the tie between hard work and academic success. The Michigan research lighted the blind spot by asking mothers in the three cities about the "most important factor in determining a child's performance in school." Those in Taipei and Sendai were likely to give a high rating to "effort." Mothers in Minneapolis were more likely to say "ability." They also were more apt to be satisfied than their Asian counterparts with their children's schools.

Abridged facility in seeing the connection between effort and learning is quite comprehensible given the fact that over, say, the last twenty years—and paradoxically running parallel to what until recently have been rising tides of complacency—there has been a shift in the way responsibility is allotted in the United States. Where failure was once attributed primarily to the shortcomings of individuals, it is now laid heavily on the assumed defects of institutions, such as schools. This progression to more complex explanations for the way things are, for all its soundness at root, has been regularly perverted into excuse-making.

More than 40 percent of students in New York City public schools drop out. Asked why, the author of one of the best-received new educational blueprints pointed to exceedingly boring instruction. Classes indeed may be uncommonly deadening in the nation's most electric city, but of at least equal import is the fact that this terrible statistic demonstrates the existence of profound social problems, including multitudes of broken homes and il-

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legitimate births to adolescent mothers, that generally are beyond the meliorative reach of educators, regardless of how good and compassionate they may be. Even closer to the mark, this record suggests, putting it coldly and acknowledging handicaps such as racial bias and structural unemployment, that many students and their families in New York City simply do not value formal education very much.

To one degree or another, individual and familial responsibility for quality education has been shucked in all American communities, not just distressed ones.

Implementation of all the imaginative and rigorous educational improvement programs on the table; adherence to all the stricter curricular and performance standards they implore; hiring of all the more intellectually talented teachers some taxpayers say they are willing to pay for, as well as granting teachers additional discretion—none of the essential developments will accomplish as much as people hope unless three things, at once simple and profound, happen: Parents encourage their children to work harder, kids (particularly as they get older) actually do so, and what is achieved is seen more readily as a measure of individual effort rather than innate gifts or institutional and societal happenstance.

Mitchell B. Pearlstein is an editorial writer for the St. Paul Pioneer Press *and* Dispatch.

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ALBERT SHANKER

For about a year now, the American people have been digesting news of educational crises and reform along with their breakfast cereals. Subjects such as student test scores, curriculum and promotion policies, the recruitment and certification of teachers, or even the findings of blue-ribbon commissions on education were once rarely discussed outside of specialized publications; now they are standard fare in the popular media.

Unfortunately; the label "education reform" may sometimes be as empty as the calories in the breakfast cereals we eat while reading about the latest education reform report or bill: good for a quick fix of energy but nutritionally empty in the long run. The reform reports focused public attention on education and resurrected the ideals of excellence and standards. These are welcome and long overdue developments. Still, most of the reports and recommendations were superficial. They skirted the central issues faced by a mass education system in which not every student is college material, and thus they provided no philosophical or practical vision of how to discharge our responsibility to educate everyone where not everyone is educable in the same way and to the same extent. And by avoiding the issue of student tracking, the reports implicitly sustained the impossible proposition that schools can ensure equal outcomes.

Some state education reform bills may also be providing the appearance but not the substance of education renewal. Take the example of improving higher-order skills in students. Many states have responded to this finding by mandating tougher academic standards, harder textbooks, and more homework, to name some highlights. These are surely necessary reforms, just the sort of "quick fix of energy" needed to move our schools in the right academic direction. Yet merely legislating stricter requirements will be an empty gesture in the long run unless we attend to the means that would enable students to meet these standards.

Tougher academic standards? Of course, but in conjunction with changes in curriculum and school organization that will ensure that students are not merely being exposed to more of the same materials they couldn't master in the first place. Harder textbooks? Sounds rigorous, but why engage in the time-worn "hard vs. easy" debate when the real issue is *good* textbooks, books so organized that students will develop a better vocabulary, greater understanding of ideas, and the ability to solve problems? More homework? Definitely. But while legislatures are mandating hours of homework a teacher must assign, many of them are failing to reduce the heavy course and student load that make it impossible for teachers to assign and give feedback on the types of homework that promote real student learning.

The point is not that elected officials shouldn't be mandating standards or deciding the ends of education. That is their duty, as it is the responsibility of teachers and administrators, as public employees, to be accountable to those standards. Yet legislators know virtually nothing about the means to accomplish the ends of education. They may be able to distinguish a low from a high set of academic standards, an easy from a hard textbook, but they don't know the process of enabling students to meet high standards, they cannot evaluate educationally sound textbooks, and they don't have a clue about classroom management and learning. In short, it's time to move such decisions away from distant bureaucracies and turn them over to teachers who know directly how the needs of students may be met.

Why not go for the real substance of educational reform, as suggested by the works of Theodore Sizer, John Goodlad, or Ernest Boyer? Why not try developing teaching into a profession? Why not confine legislation to the ends or enabling conditions of education and give teachers—as we give lawyers and doctors and other professionals—the training and authority to decide the specifics of schooling, the means to attain educational ends?

Shortcomings in teacher training and a history of inappropriately treating teachers as skilled operatives rather than professionals mean that these reforms cannot be accomplished overnight. But lest the energy that education reform commissions and legislators have injected into the public school system fuel the education crisis of tomorrow, we must also release the energies of teachers—people whom we ultimately expect to nourish the minds of our children.

Albert Shanker is president of the American Federation of Teachers.

LAWRENCE A. UZZELL

California gets all the publicity. But the real bellwether of American politics is our most suburban state, New Jersey. Thus champions of educational reform can take heart from the fact that 1983's most aggressive proposal came from New Jersey Governor Thomas Kean.

Governor Kean is the first elected official in the country to challenge the teacher-education monopoly. If he succeeds, New Jersey will become the first state where liberal-arts graduates can routinely get jobs as public-school teachers without taking education-methods courses which many consider an intellectual wasteland.

This wasteland enjoys monopolistic privileges. It is as if we had a law forbidding newspapers to hire anybody except journalism-school graduates. In fact, this analogy is too generous: The scholarly caliber of most college education departments, and their alumni, makes the typical journalism school look like Plato's Academy by comparison. The SAT scores of education majors are lower than those of any other group except clerical and vocational students. Public schools are entrusting the intellectual and cultural formation of their students to one of the most dull-witted groups of college graduates in the country.

Private schools do it differently. Whether religious or secular, selective or open-admissions, almost all of them are willing to hire teachers who have not spent one day in an education methods class. In one of the most prestigious private schools in New Jersey, only two of the sixty faculty members have the formal course credentials which would allow them to seek jobs in the state's public schools.

Close-up investigations of teacher education programs make it clear that the more talented students have good reason to avoid them. Last fall LEARN, Inc., published a report by a liberal-arts graduate who returned to college in New Jersey in order to qualify for a teaching certificate. He found his new alma mater "not hospitable to the values of intellectual inquiry, growth, industry, imagination, and respect for sources that characterize genuine liberal-arts institutions . . . Thus it is no wonder that there is widespread boredom among today's high-school students. Ignorant teachers are bored teachers, and that boredom is unfailingly conveyed . . ."

Governor Kean's proposal has enjoyed mixed fortunes. Several New Jersey college administrators, including two deans of education schools, have supported it. Surprisingly, American Federation of Teachers chief Albert Shanker, who likes to bill himself as an educational statesman, has strongly opposed it. An especially vigorous foe is Republican assemblyman John Rocco, who is also a professor of education. The Reagan Administration has kept the proposal at arm's length. In fact, Citizens for the Republic, the President's political action committee, actually supported Assemblyman Rocco in an unsuccessful primary bid for the U.S. House of Representatives.

These opponents have only delayed the Kean reform package, not killed it.

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And for once, time may be on the reformers' side, for the Kean administration has already slashed education courses at state teacher colleges and moved to eliminate education as an academic major. As enrollment in education courses falls, so will the education-school lobby's clout in Trenton.

So New Jersey is one state where "education reform" may turn out to mean something more than tax increases and cosmetic adjustments in systems that have already failed. Unfortunately, it is just about the only one.

Lawrence A. Uzzell is president of LEARN, Inc., a private research foundation specializing in education policy.

ROBERT L. WOODSON

While the public schools will be necessary to serve the majority of students, I believe that parents and students should have a choice, and it should not be completely determined by the amount of money that a parent has.

—Floretta McKenzie
Superintendent, Public Schools
of the District of Columbia

Current discussions of academic excellence and educational reform sidestep a critical issue—many children, unfairly labeled uneducable or learning disabled, have been abandoned by our public school systems without alternatives for acquiring even basic skills. The condition of our inner-city schools is a case in point. The system has produced low-achievers either through unfair labeling, lack of attention to specific learning problems, or lack of discipline. In fact, it is increasingly clear that more and more public school systems are unable to respond to the basic educational needs of inner-city and disadvantaged children. Because the children are taking much too long to learn to read, write, and do basic computations, they are losing interest, dropping out, or being "pushed out" without ever learning necessary basic skills. Recent increases in youth unemployment have been directly linked to this "miseducation."

It should come as no surprise, then, that solutions to this problem are coming not from within the public school system but from without. At long last it seems that the private school network is becoming an option for many urban minorities, the poor, and the disadvantaged.

The spark has come from the work of competent neighborhood leaders at the grassroots level. This type of organization has long been effective in addressing social problems from child care to economic inequities and community development. Now these neighborhood self-help resources are responding to the failure of public schools by establishing academically sound neighborhood-based independent schools.

The financial resources of the sponsoring neighborhoods are often slender. But inner-city minority parents have shown a willingness to endure financial burdens for the education of their children. And the results have been encouraging. Preliminary findings from a National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise (NCNE) independent school survey show that many students are outperforming their public school counterparts. This survey, a sample from more than 250 independent schools in selected cities nationwide, proves there are successful educational options for black, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian children from urban environments.

Most of the schools are owned and operated by minorities with an average enrollment from 150-200 students, usually from preschool to eighth grade, although there are some high schools. Most schools require in-house or standardized testing for placement, and most graduates go on to private schools or specialized or selective public high schools. A majority of the teachers, many of whom are former public school teachers or administrators, live within the community and are of the same ethnic/cultural background as the children they teach. Finally, the curricula are often shaped by a formal cultural or religious doctrine, which has brought much needed discipline to the educational process.

In New York, for example, in an area described by police as one of the city's worst drug-trafficking areas, Lower East Side International School operates in an old public school building badly in need of repair. Through the leadership of its founder Wallie Simpson, it has established a remarkable record of teaching disadvantaged youth. Seventy percent of the youngsters are from single female-headed households, and many of the students are labeled learning disabled. Against these odds, children are graduating with proficient skills in two languages, computers, and advanced science. Such schools as the Lower East Side International School work closely with families to create high expectations for their students in an atmosphere where success rather than failure is the norm.

Robert L. Woodson is president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise in Washington, D.C. and an adjunct fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

U.S. Senator Robert T. Stafford (R-VT) on Federal Education Programs:

"Whether it is the Chapter I Law of ESEA, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act, or many of our Higher Education programs, all these initiatives are dedicated to the promotion of access and equality of opportunity. These programs have stood the test of time, and they have proven to be not only just, but effective."

Senator Stafford is the recipient of NEA's 1984 Friend of Education Award

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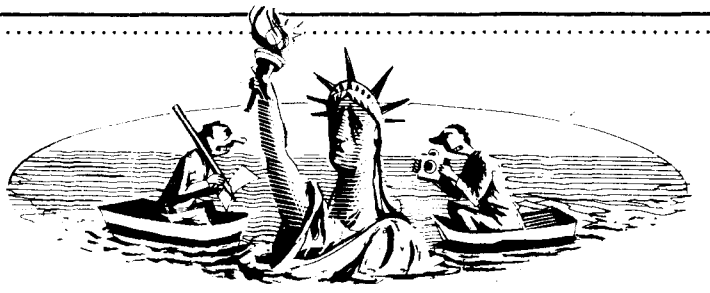

JACKSON'S VICTORY TOUR

by Fred Barnes

To be honest, it shouldn't have been much of a lure—the promise of a breakfast with the press hosted by those humorless people who call themselves Sandinistas. They didn't seem like the steak-and-eggs type, there are no Denny's or IHOP's in Managua, and I don't really care for gruel. Yet, along with a few dozen allegedly skeptical reporters covering Jesse L. Jackson on his tour of Central America and the Caribbean last June, I fell for the ploy. A Sandinista functionary, a moderately attractive young woman, came to the lobby of the Intercontinental Hotel and announced the offer of breakfast. Food, she said, was just one stop away. So I got on the bus provided by the Sandinista lady and went to the next stop. And that is how I became a prisoner of the Marxist junta.

As you might suspect, this is not the sort of thing that normally happens to American reporters when traveling overseas with a prominent American political figure. On the contrary, the standard procedure consists of, well, pampering. On presidential trips there are White House minions everywhere, making sure that the President is being covered favorably. Not so with Jackson. Sure, he cares about his coverage and he has minions, too, but they never cater to reporters. They don't know how. In fact, they rarely even disclose Jackson's schedule of appearances. Not that the schedule is classified or anything like that; it's just that they don't know what Jackson might be planning over the next few hours let alone days. That information reaches reporters only by way of rumor. And this time, rumor had it that we'd encounter Jackson at the next stop, the breakfast place.

We didn't. Jackson was off pandering to one Sandinista group or another—you'd have thought they were potential delegates to the Democratic national convention—and the so-called Jackson press corps was carted across Managua in two buses to a shabby building with a corrugated iron roof. At first, the Sandinista gendarmes wouldn't let us in the building. Then, as they checked our equipment (including my hand-sized tape recorder) for weapons or explosives, they wouldn't let us out. We remained for an hour, during which time we were each given a Sandinista tract entitled "8 Mistaken Theses." Actually, these theses were so palpably true that Jackson, for all his eagerness to please his Marxist hosts, repeated one of them as simple fact when he called the Sandinista-versus-Contra struggle a civil war. That, the tract insisted, is "a scandalous lie." Why, "it is enough to have a minimum of common sense, enough to visit Nicaragua, to realize the extraordinary degree of popular support that our Revolution enjoys," the document said. "What, then, is the origin of the war?" Yep, you guessed it. "The intellectual and material author of this invasion is the government of the United States." As always, Ronald Reagan did it. I was surprised they didn't blame him for the absence of breakfast.

Being a Sandinista means you don't have to say you're sorry, at least when you renege on a promise of breakfast. Instead of apologizing, the platoon of Sandinista officials assigned to the Yankee reporters merely switched the bait. Get back on the buses, they said, and you'll be taken to the hall where Jackson will deliver a speech. Since all the reporters, including me, came on the trip to cover Jackson, not to mingle with Sandinistas, this promise worked, too. Off we went, through Managua, a city whose downtown has not been restored after the earthquake that devastated it, and to another one-story government building. Jackson was nowhere in sight or earshot. Oh, he won't be here, a Sandinista flunky announced, but we've got the next best thing, a top official to brief you on the revolution. Those who want to listen, he said, can stay. Those who want to return to the hotel, a bus will take you there and later to the airport, where Jackson will hold a press conference upon departing Nicaragua. And if anyone wants to go to Protocol House, where Jackson is conferring with the Sandinista hierarchy, there will be a bus to transport you. Freedom-lovers in the press corps, which meant most all the reporters, opted for the hotel, where they could at least slip from the tight clutches of the Sandinistas. Me, in a fit of naiveté, I went to Protocol House.

I guessed right, as did three or four other reporters, but only because the Sandinistas had lied again. The press conference wasn't at the airport; it was held right there at Protocol House, a VIP residence that closely resembles a suburban rambler, complete with patio and pool. It is in what used to pass for a nice neighborhood in Managua. Under armed guard, the small squad of reporters waited for nearly two hours before Jackson and the Sandinistas emerged. With them were leaders of the kept church. The brave anti-Sandinista archbishop of Managua, Miguel Manuel y Bravo, was not invited. But Ernesto Cardenal, the Catholic priest who serves as the Sandinista Minister of Culture, was fobbed off as independent clergy. He's the guy with the affected, aging me-generation look—coiffured beard, jeans and beret—whom Pope John Paul II chastised during the papal visit to Nicaragua in 1982.

I did not complain, even when Jesse Jackson, Jr. ordered reporters out of the front row of chairs at the press conference to provide seats for Cardenal and his colleagues. After all, I had achieved something that eluded most reporters on the Nicaraguan leg of the trip: I actually saw Jackson with my own eyes. And he was in rare form. Fresh from two days in Cuba, Jackson was bubbling with enthusiasm for anything left-wing or Marxist or Communist. He found no enemies on the left, but plenty on the right. The Sandinistas, he declared, have "put Nicaragua back on the road to democracy, peace and reconciliation . . . The moral offensive that we

Fred Barnes is National Political Reporter for the Baltimore Sun.

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have launched has found many friends and supporters." The anti-Sandinista forces—"counterrevolutionaries," he called them—should lay down their arms for the sake of "reconciliation and healing." Wait a minute, a reporter said. How come you told President Jose Napoleon Duarte of El Salvador to begin immediate negotiations with the Marxist guerrillas in his country, but you didn't advise the Sandinistas to open talks with their opponents? "This is a very different situation [in El Salvador]," Jackson answered. "One has to put it in context." The guerrillas on the left "have standing in many parts of the world community and are legitimate political forces. That is not true in the case of the contras. The context is totally different." With that, any pretense that Jackson was an honest broker on what he characterized as his peace-making mission to Latin America disappeared.

Jackson was not the only American trotted out at Protocol House to extol the Sandinistas. There was an elderly woman billed as the head of an American residents' group—pro-Sandinista and anti-U.S., naturally. She blocked the path of reporters as they moved to leave. I ignored her, only to be accosted by a smarmy fellow with a two-page press release labeled "Statement by Delegation of U.S. Architects and Planners." These twenty guys—they actually signed their real names to the statement—didn't have any enemies on the left, either. "We have come to Nicaragua to learn first hand about the efforts of the Nicaraguan people to reconstruct their society after fifty years of autocratic rule by the Somoza family, after the devastation of the earthquake in 1972, and in the face of the economic boycott and counterrevolutionary activity initiated and sponsored by the Reagan government." Guess what? The architects and planners were "deeply ashamed that the principle [sic] obstacle to the creation of a new society in Nicaragua is the hostile and aggressive policy of our own government." Once more, Reagan did it. Still I got no breakfast.

Only one thing could make you glad to be getting on the plane for Cuba: the opportunity to get out of Nicaragua. As one veteran reporter on Latin America told me, the Sandinistas are pursuing the same totalitarian agenda as the Cubans. But they've been at it only five years, compared to twenty-five for the Cubans, and are still mighty damn inefficient.

Please don't get me wrong on the subject of Cuba. I didn't say I like the place; two days in Havana with Jackson prior to his visit to Nicaragua were enough to convince anyone that the revolution is a failure in everything but crushing the Cuban spirit, filling the prisons, and insuring that paint flakes from every building. Never have I seen a more joyless group of people; Red Sox fans in September have more zip. Scads of Cuban functionaries were assigned to the contingent of reporters with Jackson. But nobody seemed to have any authority. Cuban bureaucrats have developed the habit of jerking their heads around to look for the fellow who's supposed to give the signal. Should the press bus leave? Heads turn to see if someone passes the sign. On Jackson's first night in Havana, it took 20 minutes for a half-dozen foreign ministry subalterns to screw up the courage to dispatch a late press bus to the National Theater for reporters who missed the first bus. Perhaps they finally got the signal. At any rate, the song-and-dance show put on for Jackson was lousy. Cuba may have great baseball players and boxers; musical comedy and opera aren't the country's strength.

But Cuba, I discovered, has one extraordinary natural resource—Fidel Castro. He's a dictator, an imperialist, a persecutor of homosexuals and evangelical Christians and political opponents, the leading Communist ideologist extant, a man who regarded a ruthless schemer like Che Guevara as an idealistic dreamer. But he's got charisma and a passel of other political skills. Castro, perhaps alone among Communist dictators, could make it in an elective system. He charmed the socks off Jackson, which wasn't too hard. And he impressed a bunch of reporters, which was harder because they thought his country awful. One feature that soured reporters was the condition of the Havana Libre Hotel. It smells bad. And the hotel restaurant consists of a large, dimly lit room with a table of barely edible food; the menu never changes. Upon leaving Cuba, I actually heard an American reporter say, "You know, I used to think of myself as very liberal, but after seeing Cuba . . . "

Anyway, Castro gave Jackson the full treatment—constant attention, flattery, animated conversation. He showed up at Jose Marti Airport to greet Jackson on his two arrivals (the second was a brief stop to pick up 48 freed prisoners), he dropped by for dinner at Jackson's guest quarters and listened attentively to a Jackson monologue on normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States, he devoted ten hours to private talks with Jackson, he attended Jackson's speeches, he discussed the Bible and his own religious upbringing—what more could Jackson have wanted? All this was quite enough for Jackson to bestow "moral offensive" status on Castro.

In fatigues, Castro worked the press plane like a professional. He walked through Jackson's plane, shook hands with every reporter, and smiled at everyone. When Ann Groer of the *Orlando Sentinel* offered him her baseball hat, he merrily handed her his olive-drab fatigue cap. He made himself available to reporters at one formal press conference (this happened at one a.m.) and twice at the airport. And most clever of all, he left reporters with the silly notion that he was reading the stories they filed from Cuba. Why should he agree to free 26 Cuban political prisoners at the last minute, in addition to the 22 American

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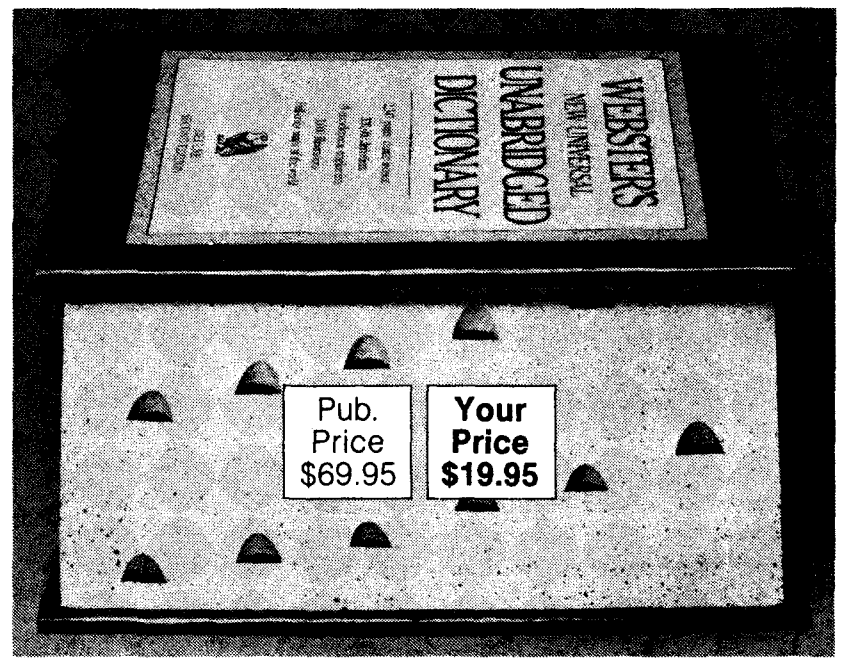

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drug traffickers he had already promised to release? He must have discovered that reporters had written that a mere 22 Americans represented a failed mission for Jackson. So he sweetened the pot to improve Jackson's press clips. To believe that Castro handed over the 26 Cubans in response to the press, you've got to have a highly inflated concept of your role in the world. Most reporters do.

To fly with Jackson into Dulles International Airport outside Washington along with a cargo of prisoners was to see a man, Jackson, absolutely certain that he would be warmly welcomed home as a conquering hero. He was near-giddy. Soon he was mugged by reality in the form of press coverage and commentary. James Reston of the *New York Times* accused Jackson of "interfering with the constitutional rights of the President and Congress to conduct foreign policy." Rowland Evans and Robert Novak called him "the first American presidential candidate to fully embrace the Third World political agenda: anti-capitalist, anti-democratic, anti-Zionist, anti-Western, anti-American." Joseph Kraft referred to Jackson as "a scoundrel." *Time* zinged him for "displaying little regard for the unfortunate consequences of attacking his own government in unfriendly countries" and for having "gratuitously injected himself into the flammable arena of Central American politics." That was tough criticism. Finally, Mary McGrory of the *Washington Post,* a holdout in the condemnation of Jackson, turned on him. "A crisis with no foreseeable end" was how she characterized him. And there was nothing Castro could do to take away the sting of that. □

EUROPEAN DOCUMENT

THE E.E.C. SPECTACLE

by Patrick Cosgrave

"The heaviest cross I have to bear," wrote Winston Churchill at the height of the Second World War, "is the Cross of Lorraine." He was referring to the chosen symbol of the Free French, selected by its notoriously tiresome leader, Charles Marie André de Gaulle, who had consigned the *tricoleur* to the broom cupboard for the duration of the fight with Hitler.

Now, General de Gaulle *was* tiresome, and he *was* difficult to deal with. Nonetheless, I feel it is high time we British made up to his ghost for Churchill's remark. After all, he twice vetoed our membership in the European Economic Community, perhaps unwittingly seeking thus to do us a favor which we spurned. (Americans, who in general saw only the prickliness of de Gaulle, should be reminded of the fact that he alone among European leaders offered unconditional support to the United States when President Kennedy imposed his naval blockade on Cuba.) We—that is, the Anglo-Saxon powers—had a better friend than we knew at the time.

"This," said M. Maurice Couve de Murville of the EEC, at Brussels in 1962, "will become just a spectacle." In her book *The General Says No,* Nora Beloff says that M. Couve added "I am no longer Foreign Minister of France." By this Miss Beloff meant to imply a difference between the president of France and his minister for foreign affairs. M. Couve denies that there was any such difference. Miss Beloff is one of those Britons who believes that, not accommodation merely, but understanding, is possible between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Western European powers. Alack, there are still many such Britons.

Unlike Miss Beloff I believe that M. Couve said what he meant to say, that the European Community would become a spectacle, in the derisory sense of that word. The difficulty of understanding between ourselves and the Western continental countries is sufficiently illustrated by the fact that the EEC budget has to allow for £250 million a year simply to translate its various bits of paper into the languages of the member countries. That works out to £220 per thousand words translated. Just over 2,000 people are employed at the business and—wait for it, dear reader—

The entry of Greece into the Community significantly increased the possible number of language combinations. Before Greece it was 6 x 5 = 30.

After Greece it has become 7 x 6 = 42.

It is proposed, moreover, that Spain and Portugal should become members and that will mean a jump to 72 language combinations for the translators to wrestle with. Even if the translators are given their favorite new toy—a computer called "Eurotra"—I fancy we shall have to get accustomed to a singular lack of comprehension, let alone a singular lack of mutual understanding.

To what purpose is all this energy and treasure being expended? During the recent (June) campaigns for elections to the European Assembly (which usually sits in Strasbourg, but has occasionally sat in Luxembourg and may, one day, sit in Brussels) we were told (in the United Kingdom at any rate) that the EEC had helped to keep the peace in Western Europe, and had certainly prevented the French and the Germans from fighting one another yet again. It would be hard to imagine a more ridiculous piece of effrontery, or a more ludicrous affront to the truth of recent history.

For thirty-five years the peace in Europe has been kept by the armed might and the grim watchfulness of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the readiness of NATO has been sustained throughout its life by the United States. Not only has the EEC nothing to do with the security of Europe, but the very terms of the Treaty of Rome (its founding document) and of the Treaty of Brussels (by which the United Kingdom acceded to the Community) exclude all questions of defense from its deliberations. Further: During the whole period of the existence of NATO it has not been found necessary to establish the kind of enormous battery of experts and translators which the Community, evidently, requires. The balance of power in Europe may well be precarious, but the EEC is doing nothing to make it less so. Nor have the NATO allies—whose number include Turkey and Norway as well as, now, Spain and Portugal—had any difficulty in understanding one another for a generation.

EEC heads of government are fond of stressing the enormous economic potential of their alliance. But when American politicians—Senator Nunn

Patrick Cosgrave is a free-lance journalist living in London.

Page Smith
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in particular—ask them to ante up and pay a proportionate (to the United States) cost of their own defense they run scared. Of all the member nations of the European Economic Community only my own country, in spite of all the difficulties of her own recession, has kept to NATO's defense-budgeting requirements, increasing real spending at the rate of 3 percent each year.

That is still, of course, only half of the American rate. Nonetheless, it emboldens me to suggest that we are your only genuine allies in Western Europe. When General de Gaulle concluded the first volume of his memoirs he wrote that "France is the cape of a continent, Britain is an island, America is another world." In my judgment the island and the other world are more surely and more inevitably joined in interest and sentiment than the island and the cape can be, or than the other world and the cape can be. When de Gaulle twice excluded the United Kingdom from the EEC he, and I repeat, did us the favor of telling us where our heart lay.

The fractious arguments of the continental powers are of no concern, except a military one, to the English-speaking nations. In 1940 Walter Lippmann wrote that the security of Western Europe was of material concern to the United States. So it is; but it is of solely military concern. The disagreements of the original six members of the European Economic Community will, in due course, reduce the Community to the spectacle of M. Couve's remark.

Moreover, the elections in June to the European Assembly suggested that, to a disturbing degree, the voters of Europe are losing faith, or at any rate patience, with the sole democratic institution in the Community. It came as no surprise to anybody that the United Kingdom, with just over 30 percent of the electorate voting, was the least enthusiastic of the participating nations. But then the British have always taken a sullen, not to say surly, view of the EEC and all its works and pomps. However, on the continent also—with the perhaps surprising exception of Denmark—the polls were badly down from the last election of 1979. In addition to this depressing (for the enthusiastic proponents of the Market) phenomenon, the crankier small parties of the Right (in France) and the Left (in West Germany) did very well, leading to the conclusion that the political systems of Western Europe are, at least in the European context, heading for bankruptcy.

The principal difficulty is that once the U.K. had become a member the contradictions of the organization started to become more and more manifest. The prime minister who took Britain in, Edward Heath, was so fervent a Euro-enthusiast that he accepted terms which were bound to be seen by a more robust leader—which Margaret Thatcher is—as producing recurring anomalies, while the disputes necessary to resolve them had increasingly debilitating effects. As I write it seems that yet another compromise will be cobbled together on the Community budget, but that no significant steps will be taken toward the longer-term reform, particularly of the Common Agricultural Policy. Both Mr's. Thatcher and President Mitterrand of France have made recent calls for root and branch reforms, and the Germans —who, of course, pay most of the bills—make such calls continually. The brutal fact of the matter is, however, that over the early years of the Community's existence so many vested interests—of the farming community in particular—had been created that tackling changes in them has become virtually politically impossible.

More dangerous than any of this, in my view, is the potentially destructive effect of the existence of the EEC on the whole Western defense system. In one respect, of course, the Communi-

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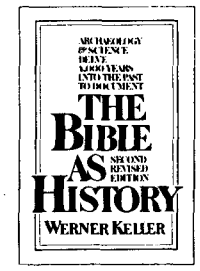

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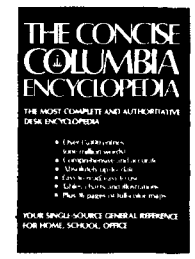

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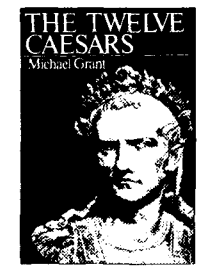

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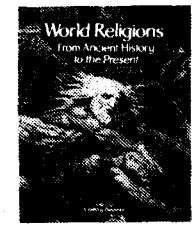

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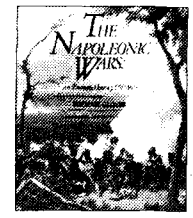

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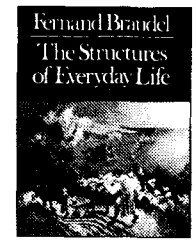

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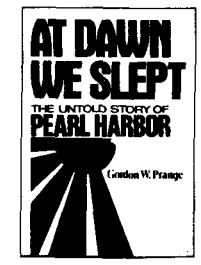

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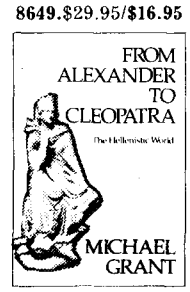

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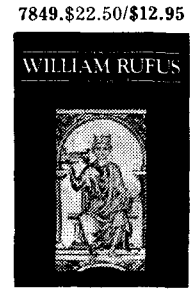

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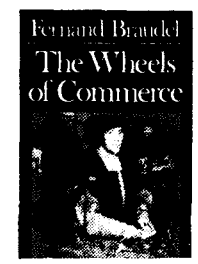

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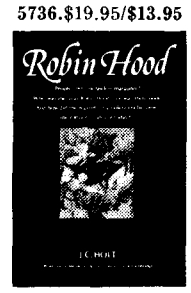

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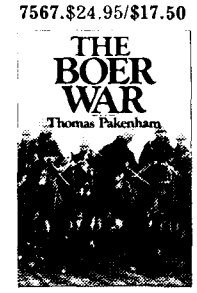

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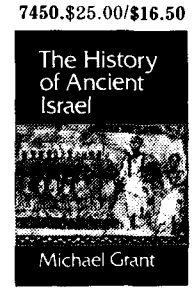

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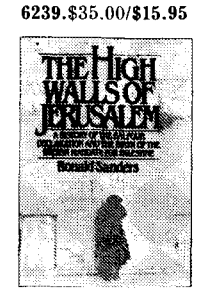

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ty has served a vital purpose of its founders: It has been the instrument of procuring reconciliation between France and West Germany. The financial burdens it has imposed on its members, however, the attendant hubris that inflicts upon otherwise relatively sane political leaders the destructive ambition of creating a foreign policy independent of and different from the United States, and the sheer consumption of political energy through its continual and often squalid quarreling, has more than a little tarnished the bright dreams shared by those who drafted the Treaty of Rome.

A generation from now we will, I think, wonder what it was all about, as the nations of Western Europe take their collective place in history with the once mighty medieval combination of German city states in the Hanseatic League. My hope is that, as this melancholy prospect unfolds before unbelieving eyes, the United States and the United Kingdom will have the good sense to preserve *their* alliance, the intelligence gradually to distance themselves from continental squabbling, and the wisdom to see the alternative steps they must take. □

EMINENTOES

THE IRON LADY OF COLLECTIVISM

by Herb Greer

For the brightest and the best of a hundred years ago in Britain, an individualist was by definition morally depraved. This judgment did not express a real sense of sin. It was a token of outrage at the bad (i.e., selfish) behavior of a relative few who possessed large amounts of money and property. These persons, it was felt, had to be rescued along with the rest of mankind from the bondage of their own selfishness—but not by individual conscience or grace or common sense. The only true redeemer was to be the state, with its ultimate sanction of coercive force.

Collectivism was the latest cry, and as Beatrice Webb put it in the first volume of her autobiography:

> . . . in the world of philanthropy as in the world of politics as I knew it in the eighties, there seemed to be one predominant question: Were we or were we not to assume the continuance of the capitalist system as it then existed; and if not, could we, by taking thought, mend or end it?

The aim of Mrs. Webb and her colleagues was to extirpate what they saw as a corrupt, anarchic individualism and replace it with a clean efficient "housekeeping state," in which everyone would be to some extent a public servant—not with the dirty motive of profit, but for the honorable rewards of praise and promotion.

Today this is a less respectable idea, because of what has happened where statism triumphed: the slaughter of millions upon millions of Russians (at a time when the Webbs were hailing the USSR as a "new civilization"); or the work of altruists like Heinrich Himmler, whose corps of efficient public servants included such stars as Adolf Eichmann. Our own generation has its examples of altruistic efficiency in more remote places like Vietnam and Cambodia, and of course in the Soviet system of psychiatric hospitals and the wide clean precincts of the Gulag.

The residue of nineteenth-century radical chic has been less dramatic in the free societies, but no less real. Its damage here is more subtle, mostly occurring in the minds of intelligent, honest, and genuinely compassionate people who still work unselfishly and long (as the Webbs did) for a dream which—as hard experience now shows—is a peculiarly horrible nightmare plausibly disguised. This paradox has puzzled many observers, not least some of the "liberals" themselves. Part of its origin can be explored in *The Diary of Beatrice Webb,*[1] the first two volumes of which appeared last year in a new edition by Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie. Their heavily cut version of Mrs. Webb's immense manuscript takes her story up to the last quarter of 1905, just before the redoubtable Fabian and social researcher was appointed to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the Relief of Distress. These books, together with Beatrice Webb's autobiographies,[2] do much to explain the bizarre politics of this complex and fascinating woman; they cast a particularly cold light on why, as one of her family wrote, she crowned her life's work by commending "to her countrymen and the whole world a system of servitude more far-reaching and comprehensive than any hitherto known."

Beatrice Webb, née Potter, was born and bred in the very heart of nineteenth-century capitalism. Her father was a war profiteer, and the individualist philosopher Herbert Spencer remained her close friend until he died. In the normal course of events she, like her sisters, would have grown up into a society wife in the upper-middle ruling class of Britain. She did consider marriage with the Liberal demagogue and reformer Joseph Chamberlain, and in fact remained in love with him for much of her life. But the two of them were like positive magnetic poles: He demanded absolute submission while she, brilliantly intelligent and self-educated, clung to her independence of mind and character. The alliance foundered. Beatrice turned first to social work and then discovered her vocation with research into the great puzzle of the age: why, amidst the spectacular scientific and commercial progress of the nineteenth century, poverty was so

Herb Greer is an American writer and playwright living in Europe.

[1] Vol. 1: (1873-1892) "Glitter Around and the Darkness Within"; Vol. 2: (1892-1905) "All the Good Things of Life." Harvard University Press, $25.00 each.

[2] *My Apprenticeship* and *Our Partnership.*

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egregious and so widespread. This interest led her into Fabian circles and eventually into marriage and partnership with Sidney Webb.

Disraeli's concept of "two nations" was no mere catchword in the last century. Until the cholera epidemics of the early 1800s, middle-class Britons had no accurate idea of how the poor lived or what they were really like. Poverty was supposed to be caused by defects of character such as laziness, or a supine acceptance of misfortune. When middle-class doctors went among the poor to fight cholera, they discovered a different reality: not a tribe of scroungers and malingerers but honest, hard-working folk trapped and suffering in what amounted to another world. Doctors were followed by researchers, by novelists like Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell, and finally by reformers intent on a rescue mission.

The well-to-do prided themselves on belonging to the greatest and richest empire in history, served by the best scientists, engineers, and businessmen who had helped to make Britain the most successful and advanced country in the world. Now its prosperous burghers were told that many, indeed most, of their fellow-citizens were ill-housed, ill-paid, and, through no fault of their own, living "on the very verge of starvation." Evidently something was badly out of joint.

For us, to whom poverty is a kind of media cliché and a political football for pressure groups, it is not always easy to understand the impact of this new reality on Victorian society. There was a pervasive feeling of puzzled guilt among the middle classes and the well-to-do—what Beatrice Webb called a class consciousness of sin. It seemed obvious that if the poor were not at fault, then the villainy lay elsewhere, in the selfish individualism of the few who ruled in business and government. They made profits and enjoyed life while their workers made barely enough (and sometimes not enough) to live like human beings. This logic, leavened with a kind of perverted *richesse oblige,* led into a conspiracy theory, expressed by Mrs. Webb in these words:

> . . . the longer I studied the social organization in which I was born and bred, the stronger became my conviction that the distribution of power and wealth among my fellow-citizens was being controlled, and very deliberately controlled, in the interests of the propertied classes, to the detriment of the vast majority of the people . . .

This notional clearing-house for wealth and a species of power that (in Eric Hoffer's phrase) seemed to come in cans was not absurd to Victorians who were used to being ruled (and ruling) through an oligarchic elite. There was some talk of democratic action to set things right, but Mrs. Webb and her colleagues knew better than that. Instead of breaking up the system (her diary makes it clear that she knew this was neither possible nor desirable in Britain), she proposed to replace the plutocrats and their amateur political "artists" with a corps of experts professionally trained and indoctrinated with her ideas. This "housekeeping state" of (benevolent) despots would turn the system around and run it for the *benefit* of the vast majority.

Beatrice Webb is often portrayed as a kind of patron saint to the Welfare State. It is true that her Minority Report for the Royal Commission on the Poor Law outlined many of Britain's later "social" reforms. But the idea that she progressed from the "housekeeping state" to the Welfare State and then lurched into a strange uncritical admiration of the Soviet Union does not square either with her character or with her ideas as they appear in her diaries and autobiographies. The tyranny of the state is implicit in her earliest thinking about society. At the age of twenty-five she wrote with admiration, almost awe, of

> . . . the great central idea of Christianity, this sacrifice of the individual to the community . . .

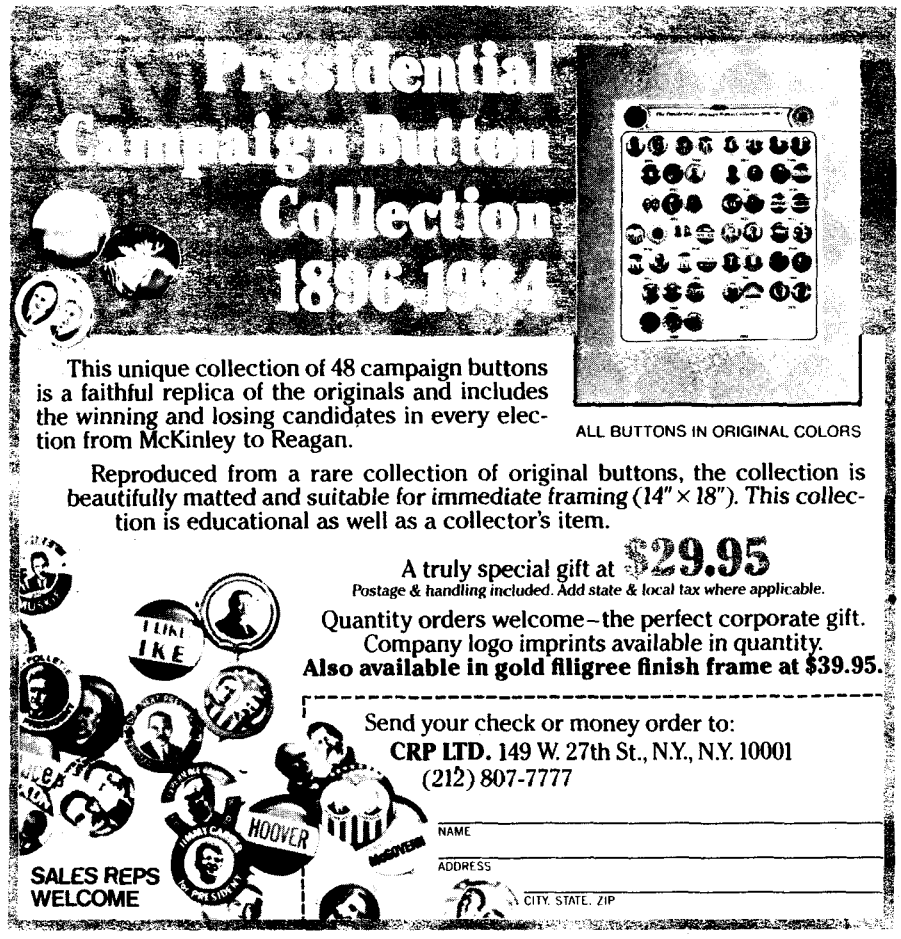
Four years later she carried it from religion into politics:

> . . . I maintain that *I* am the *true socialist,* through my willingness to sacrifice the individual to the community . . .

Her "housekeeping state" was not to be run on an eighteenth-century system of values, with inalienable rights and all that. Mrs. Webb did not believe in unconditional rights of any kind. Her inspiration lay further back in time, in the feudal system with its tissue of mutual obligation between vassal and lord. That her "experts" would be lords and the rest vassals was beyond doubt, and she was not very concerned with what this would mean for the individual:

> "Experimenting in the lives of other people, how cold-blooded!" I hear the reader object. It is necessary to explain that "experimenting" cannot be avoided; that all administration . . . necessarily amounts to nothing less than "experimenting in the lives of other people."

As she admitted, she came from a class of people who were accustomed to giving orders. This habit, together with a puritan temperament of extraordinary ferocity, guided her political and social ideas all her life, and with great consistency. She despised the common herd; one of her central concerns was to raise the moral tone of the lower classes—first by making them better off, then by compulsion if necessary. She meant to make sure that the elimination of poverty was answered by a proper expression of gratitude and obligation to the state. British politicians, more concerned with the democratic business of getting votes, appalled her by their implementation of her ideas. Her "Welfare State" outline in the Poor Law Commission's Minority Report did not include the unconditional doling out of money. She hated Lloyd George's 1911 National Insurance Act because it en-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tailed just that. Her conception included a quid pro quo for all state largesse. This meant real effort from the recipient to improve both his circumstances *and character,* and so contribute to the health of society. This contribution was to be the real motive behind welfare. For those who out of weakness or stubbornness failed to measure up, Mrs. Webb had a solution: They were to be shown the error of their ways, i.e., sent to what we now call a re-education camp.

The ideas of the Webbs altered not only in the hands of Lloyd George, but (for all that Clement Attlee paid tribute to the Webbs) under the postwar Labour government which actually set up the Welfare State. If she had lived to see it, the sight would not have pleased her very much. Malcolm Muggeridge, who knew her well, wrote:

> . . . her severely practical side, inherited from her father, made her realize at once that handing out unconditional largesse to the citizenry of a universal suffrage democracy would have grave moral and social implications . . .

During the postwar decades these implications have emerged with great force, not just among the poor but in the comfortable middle classes. The principal result has been and still is a pattern of expectation which centers on *government,* not just as the source of protection and guaranteed survival, but of general, almost godlike wisdom which confers a *constantly rising* standard of living. This lust for tutelage has penetrated some rather surprising and personal areas of life.[3] The British (and not a few Americans of "liberal" disposition) show signs of longing for a system of government imagined about 150 years ago like this:

> . . . an immense protective power which is alone responsible for securing their enjoyment and watching over their fate. That power is absolute, thoughtful of detail, orderly, prudent, and gentle. . . . It provides for [the citizens'] security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, makes rules for their testaments, and divides their inheritances.
> . . . it does not break men's will but softens, bends, and guides it; it seldom enjoins, but often inhibits action; . . . it is not at all tyrannical . . .

Writing that, Tocqueville complained that he could not find a term to express what he was describing. Today we have it in the "ideal" Welfare State, whose business, according to socialist thinker Anthony Crosland, is to "remove all sources of discontent."

Tocqueville supposed that such a system would reduce people to "a flock of timid and hard-working animals, with the government as its shepherd," quite like the human battery farm for tractable and sedulous proles envisaged by Beatrice Webb. In *The Road to Serfdom* F.A. Hayek is concerned that it will inspire a growing acceptance of tyranny in the style of Russia or Nazi Germany. But this is not where present changes in Britain seem to be heading. The British tradition of stroppy individualism, while not dead, is often malversed into a subnational collective of some kind. Occasionally this points to a possibility at once messier and more dangerous than the tyranny-nightmares: degeneration of the political and social body into a congeries of snarling and uninhibited pressure groups, based mostly on trade unions and ethnic communities and shouting about "rights" when they mean privileges.

Even now political parties, especially Labour, make it their business to inflate Welfare-State expectations to an impossible degree, in particular exaggerating the control of government in economic matters. Consequent public dissatisfaction is then exploited in a zero-sum power game for control of

[3] As I write this, I see in today's (London) *Times*: "How can we eat and stay healthy? . . . it is possible—but . . . government should show the way."

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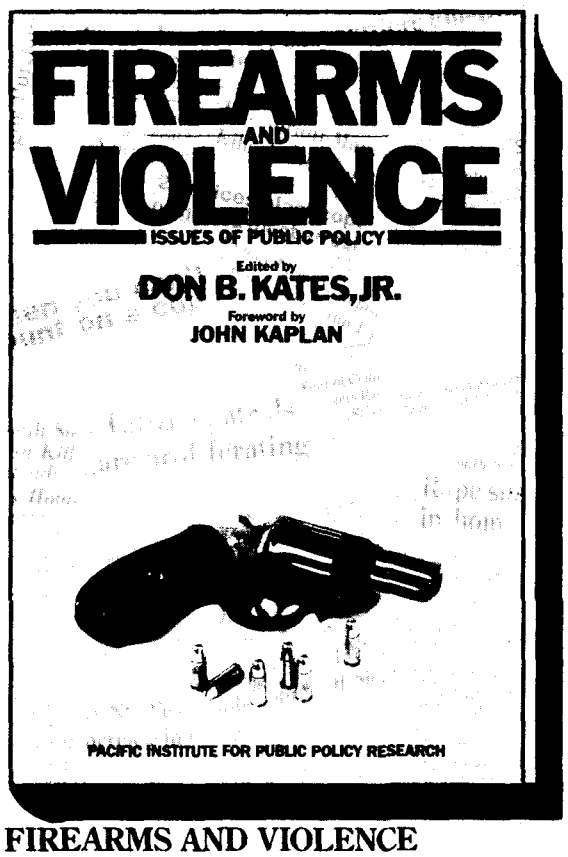

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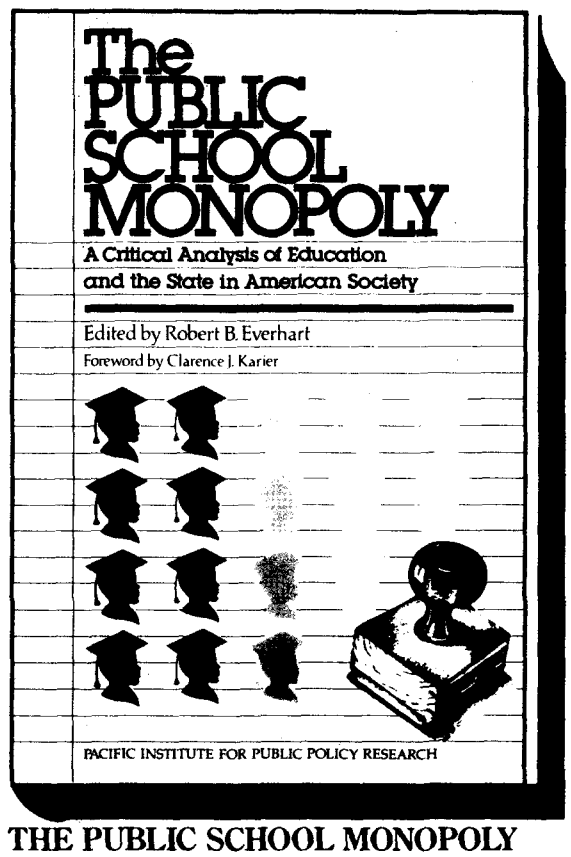

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revenue, administrative favor, and finally of Parliament with its unlimited sovereignty. It becomes the aim of the loser in this contest (Labour is by far the worst in this respect) not just to keep the ruling party honest in the normal way of a loyal opposition, but further to inflame and exploit popular discontent and expectations by fair means or foul, and to use these forces to destroy the current government. British democracy seems headed away from a ritual of electoral consent to govern, into a mutually destructive battle which actually impairs government.

This is happening today despite the fact that the poor are on the whole far more comfortable than they were in the time of Beatrice Webb, as is almost everybody else. It is a bitter comment on the Fabian belief that, if only people were better housed and clothed, they would *be* better or (which was the same thing to the reformers) behave better. Neither Mrs. Webb nor her Fabian friends, nor the postwar idealists in the Labour party realized the infinite nature of expectations. Their assumptions rested on a certain concept of human nature, much older even than Mrs. Webb's feudal model for society. This view appeared as a major influence in Europe on the cusp of the fourth and fifth centuries when another Briton, a monk called Pelagius, offered a famous heresy to the Western world, one which appealed (as Fabianism later did) to the sort of rough common sense which then held that the world was flat. Discounting the onerous myth of original sin, Pelagius held that salvation was a prize to be earned purely by human effort, without the complicating factor of God's grace. Fabian socialism was essentially a secular version of this belief. Like Nietzsche's ass-worshipers in *Also Sprach Zarathustra,* Mrs. Webb and her colleagues meant to achieve salvation (they called it socialism) not in the next world but in this one. Their anointed elite of experts were going to wipe out evil by getting rid of poverty and the inequalities of wealth; these good works, in true Pelagian fashion, would save society and mankind.

Of course Beatrice Webb did not consciously model herself on Pelagius. Neither in her diary nor in her autobiographies does she mention him. But her books stress again and again that the nature of her quest was religious—not just in her "Christian" faith in the sacrifice of the individual to the state, but in this summing up of her own true belief:

> I have staked all on the essential goodness of human nature, on that which maketh toward righteousness. If this be mere illusion, mere cant, then my own little life is a wretched failure, an absurd bubble pretending substance.

This might be an elegy for Beatrice Webb herself, or a lament for the mutually corrupting influence of her ideas and the democratic politics of Britain. It might also be an epitaph for those politics, if they were dead and gone. But they are not—yet. There is time enough still for this little confession to serve as a grim warning. □

THE TALKIES

CONFESSIONS OF A CRITIC

by John Podhoretz

In September 1979, I became the movie critic of *The American Spectator,* and in February 1982 I contributed what was to be my last review during that stint. After writing a score of articles on the movies, I found that I had run dry, could think of nothing more to say. There was not a film being made that truly inspired me to sit down at the typewriter and bat out the thousand words necessary to fill this space.

Clearly I have had a change of heart, since I am resuming my duties as *TAS*'s movie critic. But the sorts of difficulties that caused my initial block are in fact at the very core of the problems with movie criticism in general.

There are, I think, basically three kinds of movie critics. The first is the one we are all immediately familiar with; I would call him the "consumer guide." He is the daily reviewer who often uses stars and halves of stars to evaluate the movies he discusses; he is Gene Siskel or Roger Ebert, the often unintentionally hilarious hosts of the popular syndicated television program "At the Movies"; he is the fellow granted 90 seconds on the nightly news to offer his often monosyllabic judgment on a given movie.

John Podhoretz is critic-at-large of the Washington Times *and movie critic of* The American Spectator.

The second is the "academic critic," of whom the general public is by and large ignorant. He contributes huge, detailed articles to scholarly journals like *Film Comment, Sight and Sound,* and *Films in Review.* His studies are as intricate and worshipful as an English professor's on one of the great works in the literary canon. Like all academics, he takes up specific "auteurs," directors usually, and examines these masters' works over the course of a career, looking for the themes, symbols, and issues that supposedly run through all of the movies.

The third is the one I would call the "sociological critic." This is the category I would place myself in; the form was pioneered by Robert Warshow and Manny Farber. What mainly interests the sociological critic is the failure or success of a given film with its audience—himself included. Since movies are made for the purpose of garnering profits, the sociological critic assumes that the moviemakers are seeking audience approval by tapping into an audience's mood, by seeking to play chords that will be pleasing to an audience. When an audience responds positively or negatively to a movie, in the sociological critic's eye, it is revealing a great deal about its own thoughts on the subjects the movie is dealing with. So what the movie *says* is of great importance.

As a result, not once during my previous tenure did I review a foreign-language film. In the sociological equation, the audience for foreign films is too small and too unrepresentative of the nation as a whole to tell us very much about the mood of the country. Now, this may seem like a cardinal violation of the principal purpose of any critic: to discuss and evaluate the artistic quality of the works within his general purview. But this is precisely the point: As a critic, I am not really interested in the movies as an art.

If I were, I would long ago have run screaming from a movie theater, vowing never to return. If the movies are to be considered high art, then they have failed massively. Minor art, perhaps; but the truly great movies, the ones that seem to elevate us to a higher plane, can, I think, literally be counted on one hand. And amusingly enough, these movies are far from my favorites. I prefer *The Godfather* to *Children of Paradise, Duck Soup* to *Smiles of a Summer Night.* When it comes to the movies, I am an unremitting lowbrow. In this sense, at least, I think I am pretty close to the mass audience as a whole, which overwhelmingly prefers the low to the high in the movies.

In any case, I like far too many movies, and for far too many reasons, for my personal judgment on them to be of any use to anyone. I may like or dislike *The Last Starfighter* or *Conan the Destroyer,* but I simply don't know *you* well enough to know whether you would agree with me. I'm certainly happy to offer my views and will do so during the course of a piece; more important, on those rare occasions when I truly detest a movie, I find there is something especially loathsome about that movie that gives me reason to attack it. But many factors contribute to my overall opinion of a movie. A pretty girl can go a long way toward redeeming a bomb. A nice bit of scenery, a good musical number, even the sight of my old neighborhood in New York can obviate much that I do not enjoy. If the popcorn is inedible, that inevitably colors my reaction to what is happening on the screen.

I think we all operate in much the same way. A person who loves Clint Eastwood cannot possibly explain why to a person who hates Eastwood. I for one cannot believe that Hollywood would think of casting Robby Benson in anything, but it continues to do so, and there are probably nice, normal human beings out there whose hearts leap with joy when they see Benson's name in the opening credits. (I'm not sure I would like to have a drink with them, though.)

This is why, unlike all the other arts, movies don't really require that their

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critics have any special training. We are all critics. A fourteen-year-old may not know why *Portrait of a Lady* is a great novel, and his words against it can be dismissed as ignorant or philistine. He can also be expected to change his opinion when he gets better educated. But a fourteen-year-old can offer an explanation of a movie he has just seen that will be as worthwhile as mine, and probably ten times as valuable as Vincent Canby's in the *New York Times*. We are all experts in the movies; we've all grown up with them, we have sampled film history on television, we know more about movies than about any other art.

It is for this reason that I don't think there is much value in the consumer's-guide approach to reviewing. I have never met anyone who relies upon the opinion of a movie critic with any regularity to make his cinematic selection of the weekend. A critic like Canby can destroy the possibilities for success of a small art film, but he will have little impact on a movie going after a mass audience. That is because the mass audience knows what it likes before seeing something. How this can be I don't know, but it is a truth acknowledged in Hollywood, and if anyone could figure it out he would have a lucrative career in store for him at Paramount or Universal.

What is important about the movies, and the reason that an audience knows what it likes better than a critic, is that movies are what Warshow called "the immediate experience." A mass audience unself-consciously responds to what it is seeing up on the screen, it remembers that it enjoyed this scene, didn't particularly like that one. These reactions are spontaneous; they are at the heart of the moviegoing experience; they are how we come to judgment of a movie. But a consumer's guide usually reads all about a movie months before its release, and he knows from trade papers that Hollywood has high hopes for this one and no hopes for that. He knows that Mike Nichols is an important director, Richard Fleischer unimportant, and deals with their movies accordingly.

This is where the academic critics come in. For it is they who usually set the agenda that the consumer's guides follow. They name the hot directors, impugn the not-so-hot, and raise the specter of greatness that is the most terrifying demon haunting the consumer's guide. We all laugh when we read that Samuel Pepys called *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a ridiculous play; how horrible it would be for a consumer's guide to condemn a movie like Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* when a consensus is developing among the experts that it is "great"! In 1957 consumer's guide critics laughed at Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo,* and I think they were right to do so. Now, after ten years of serious intellection in the quarterlies about the greatness of *Vertigo,* the movie is rereleased and the consumer's guides fall all over it.

So I write about movies as a cultural, not an artistic, phenomenon. But just as consumer's guides are susceptible to corruption and intimidation, and the academics susceptible to their desires to "make" a movie's artistic reputation, the sociological critic is in danger of spinning theories about the movies that conform to his own views about what the audience *should* be feeling instead of what the audience really *is* feeling. At certain points during my previous tenure, I said and wrote things of which I am ashamed because they weren't true when I wrote them, and I knew it. Mostly these things had to do with political questions. I gave *Kramer vs. Kramer* higher marks as an anti-feminist statement than it deserved because that was what I wanted it to be. I made light of the anti-Semitism of the movie *Eyewitness* because I needed the movie to be good and sound to strengthen my attack on the "auteur" theory I was making in my piece. The academic critic invents great movies when none can be found; the sociological critic invents trends when there are none.

A sadder but wiser boy, I hope to have outgrown this tendency. In any case, here is the caveat: Do not expect this column to tell you what you should go to see at the movies. That you know better than I. □

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE EVOLUTION OF COOPERATION

Robert Axelrod/Basic Books/$17.95

William Tucker

This book is a landmark in social thought.

For centuries, centralists and statists have been able to dismiss the doctrine of laissez-faire by saying that *nothing will happen* if government does not "do something" in directing social action.

The supporters of the free market and "natural liberty," on the other hand, have based their position on the intuitive perception that constructive human actions do not have to be instigated by a central authority, but come about spontaneously. No one, however, has ever been able to describe exactly *how* these constructive human interactions arise without someone "planning" it.

The Evolution of Cooperation provides the answer. It shows how cooperation evolves *spontaneously*—without the intervention of a centralized authority, and *without the need for altruism.* It is a triumphant affirmation of the view of society painfully constructed by Adam Smith, and later elaborated by Ludwig von Mises and Frederick A. Hayek—even though the author never seems to have heard of "Austrian economics," and seems totally unaware of its close relationship to his subject.

But no matter, it is all here.

Robert Axelrod, a professor of political science and public policy at the University of Michigan, built his discoveries out of a game called "the Prisoner's Dilemma." A recent favorite among social psychologists, the Prisoner's Dilemma is a mathematical model for a situation where two people find that *both* their efforts are required in order for *either* of them to succeed.

The game goes like this. Two people are caught and accused of a crime they have committed. Both are urged to confess. If they cooperate and do not betray each other, then neither will be convicted. If one confesses and implicates the other, however, he receives a larger bonus, called the "temptation" payoff, while the "sucker" who cooperated without being reciprocated receives nothing. If *both* confess, both get a "punishment," which is slightly better than the sucker's payoff, but not as good as winning through cooperation.

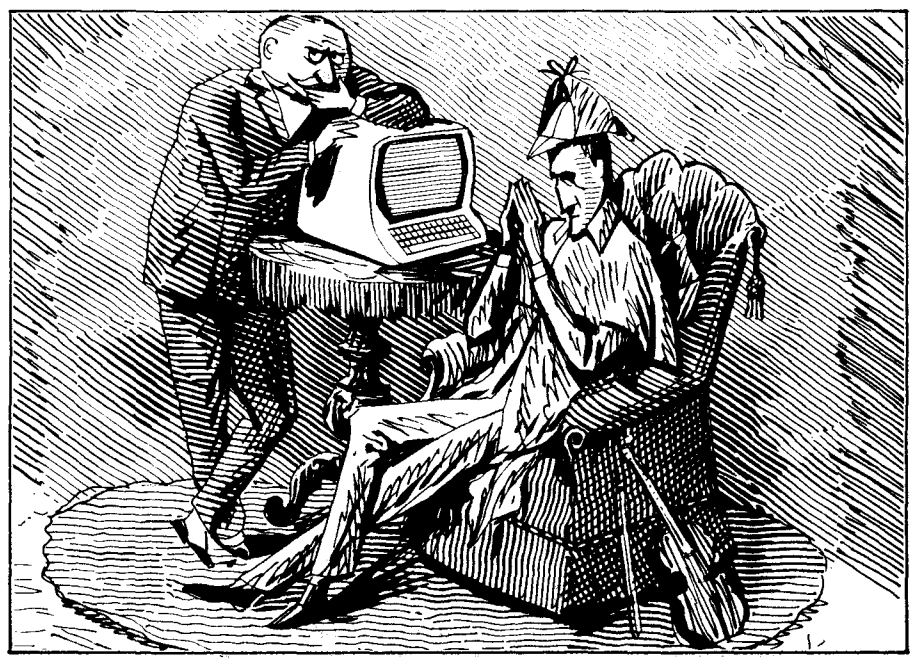
William Tucker is a contributing editor of Harper's.

The scoring is like this: Cooperate successfully, 3 points each; betray the other successfully, 5 points; cooperate while the other betrays you ("sucker's payoff"), 0 points; betray each other ("punishment"), 1 point each.

In order to get a high score, it is necessary to come up with a pattern of behavior that produces mutual cooperation, without running the risk of being "suckered" too often by the other player.

The game has been floating around social psychology circles for about a decade. What Axelrod did was to arrange a computer tournament, in which he invited famous mathematicians and other theorists to submit strategies on how they would play the game over a long series of encounters. Then he played all the strategies off against each other by computer to see which one accumulated the highest long-term score.

The results were astonishing. In both tournaments—the first involving 15 different strategies, the second 63—*the simplest strategy won.* This strategy was called TIT FOR TAT, submitted by Canadian psychologist Anatol Rapoport.



TIT FOR TAT plays the Prisoner's Dilemma in the following manner. It cooperates on the first round. After that, it always does what the other player did on the *previous* round. If the other player cooperated on the previous round, TIT FOR TAT cooperates. If the other player defected, TIT FOR TAT "punishes" the other player by defecting on the next round—but *only* the next round. That's it.

This simple bit of human wisdom—the implicit principle behind every justice system—successfully outcompeted more than 75 other expert strategies—many of them devised to compete in the most subtle, devious, or complicated fashions.

The implication is clear. The principle of TIT FOR TAT—which is the way most human beings play the game of life—has evolved because it is the most successful way of getting other people to cooperate—whether it be for trading, restraining from violence, borrowing and lending, or cooperating in a collective effort. It's enough to make you want to start a civilization.

Axelrod—who was astonished by the result—attributes the success of TIT FOR TAT to four basic qualities: First, he says, TIT FOR TAT is "nice," meaning that it *never betrays first.* It always assumes good intentions on the part of the other player. Second, it is "retaliatory," in that it does not let infractions go unpunished, but reciprocates immediately. Third, although retaliatory, it is not *vengeful.* It extracts only an equal amount of punishment for each betrayal. (The principle of "eye for an eye," you may recall, was originally set up to *limit* punishment and reduce excessive vengeance. It is only lately that we have begun to think of it as too *severe.*) And fourth, it is easy to understand. Many of the strategies were "too smart for their own good," and ran afoul because they failed to convey a clear and comprehensible message to the other player.

All this is marvelous news for people who think that "tit for tat" is a sensible and realistic way to run such basic institutions as the justice system, commerce, foreign policy, and society in general. It is a triumphant vindication of plain old common sense.

But this is only the beginning of Axelrod's investigations. Dozens of other fascinating discoveries eventually emerged.

For example, when played against each other in lengthy computer tournaments, the strategies quickly separated themselves into two categories. The first was the "nice" strategies (I would call them "optimistic")—the ones that assumed good will on the part of the other player and did not betray first. The second was the "not nice" strategies, which were generally built around a plan for *not* cooperating, but shrewdly trying to betray the other player.

The nice strategies always did better. With only one exception (which turned out to be a kind of anomaly), the "nice" strategies were all bunched at the top, while the "not nice" strategies formed a separate subclass at the bottom. Moreover, when played over an evolutionary time sequence, the "not nice" strategies eventually faded into extinction, while the nice strategies all survived.

What is even more remarkable is the way in which TIT FOR TAT achieved its own success. Incredibly, although TIT FOR TAT compiled the highest cumulative score in both tournaments, *it never won an individual encounter*

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with another player. As Axelrod points out, its great strength was not in beating other players, *but in eliciting cooperative behavior from them.* By taking an optimistic attitude, by firmly and fairly punishing any infractions, and by not being too complicated about the whole thing, TIT FOR TAT was able to establish an environment in which *other players* eventually found cooperation the best strategy—whatever their original intentions.

Would that we could establish a social milieu in which the same basic rules applied.

There are all sorts of other marvelous insights in this book. As Thomas Shelling, of Harvard, comments on the jacket: "It is a joy to watch somebody coax so much out of a good idea."

What about "social stability," for example? Can a population of "good guys" playing TIT FOR TAT be successfully invaded by a population of "meanies" coming in and trying to take advantage of their cooperative behavior? Apparently not. In fact, because of TIT FOR TAT 's willingness to punish infractions swiftly and surely, it is *less* vulnerable to exploitation than other strategies that are either more lenient or more vengeful toward people who are trying to take advantage of them.

But there is even more. One of the truly frightening implications Axelrod discovered is that a population in which everyone always betrays everyone else is also *perfectly stable* and invulnerable to invasion. A single cooperating individual trying to preach "niceness" and reciprocity to a population of "betrayers" is doomed to failure.

How did new forms of social cooperation ever evolve, then? Axelrod provides the answer. Small populations of cooperating individuals *can* establish themselves in a non-cooperating society, mainly through cooperation with each other, and setting a good example to the non-cooperators.

All this has enormous implications for the historical development of capitalism. What we call "capitalism," in fact, is really just voluntary cooperation in economics and other social efforts. As von Mises and Hayek have pointed out, the "free market" is nothing more than the trading arrangements that arise *spontaneously* when people are left free to pursue their own economic interests. But the Austrians were never really able to pinpoint the exact mechanism by which this spontaneous cooperation arose. Axelrod, I believe, has done it.

Moreover, Axelrod's analysis makes clear that when liberals and socialists talk about "cooperation"—when they argue, for example, that "we must have a society based on cooperation, and not competition"—they are not really talking about cooperation at all. What they are describing is a system in which "altruism" is *imposed* on people from the top down—by centralized coercion. Real cooperation is a spontaneous phenomenon. It cannot be engineered by an outside authority.

Axelrod's cooperation theory also offers a model for many other historical developments. The phenomenon of a "small group of cooperators" invading a broader "non-cooperating society" is, of course, just the way capitalism evolved. In most societies, traders are a small group of outsiders—Jews, Chinese, Arabs, Armenians—who do not try to "convert" the larger population, but prosper through the advantage they achieve in cooperating among themselves, and eliciting cooperative behavior from others.

This pattern of cooperation was put on a broader level within European society when a small group of *insiders*—the Protestants—began to follow the same strategy. The "Protestant ethic" became the format for voluntary cooperation on which the economic prosperity of the West was built. Groups that had evolved similar cooperating ethics in their own societies have found it very easy to join this trade-based system—particularly in such an open society as America.

But Axelrod is also aware of the dangers that await any such small group that prospers through the cooperative ethic. One of the hardest tasks for people playing the Prisoner's Dilemma, he says, is to resist the impulse to betray the other player simply because he is doing well—even if you are doing well yourself.

"People are used to thinking about zero-sum transactions," he writes. "But most of life is not a zero-sum game. Generally, both sides can do well, or both can do poorly . . . In a non-zero-sum world you do not have to do better than the other player to do well for yourself."

All successful entrepreneurs know this. But successful cooperation always arouses the suspicion that the other person is doing well because he is "exploiting" *you.* This provokes betrayals, and soon *both players* start to lose. If you want to succeed at the Prisoner's Dilemma, writes Axelrod, the first rule is: "Don't be envious . . . envy is self-destructive."

Ironically, the one place where Axelrod falls down is in his own specialty—political science. He begins his chapter on politics by noting that, whenever he sets a group of students to playing the Prisoner's Dilemma for the first time, they inevitably respond to its frustrations by saying, "There ought to be a law against this."

This doesn't surprise me. In fact, I would say that the great portion of our laws are simply attempts by one or another group in society to escape the frustrations of having to cooperate with each other. They do this by persuading the state to coerce the other party into playing the game on unequal terms. Rent controls, farm price supports, regulated competition, trade barriers—almost all forms of economic legislation are just a way of providing one player with an *escape* from the Prisoner's Dilemma, at the expense of the others.

Axelrod, however, misses this point completely—which is why he is going to be astonished if he ever encounters the Austrian school. He sees the political game only in terms of trade-offs between legislators, and entirely misses the point that most "politics" is a matter of superceding the voluntary cooperation of the marketplace with the coercion of the political system.

But this is only a small matter. The main point is that Axelrod, in *The Evolution of Cooperation,* has finally offered a working mathematical model for the "system of natural liberty" originally preached by Adam Smith. He has solved the problem of how the whole incredible success story of human cooperation has come about. It didn't happen because it was planned by the government. Nor was it dreamed up by social philosophers trying to implement the "perfect and just" society of their imaginations.

Instead, it evolved out of the plain, common-sense wisdom of ordinary human beings, inventing and reinventing the simplest of all strategies ever developed for eliciting cooperative behavior out of one another—the grand old game of "tit for tat." □

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Dr. Herbert I. London is currently Dean of the Gallatin Division of New York University. He is a director of the Hudson Institute's "Visions of the Future" education project.

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THE DEMOCRATIC MUSE: VISUAL ARTS AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Edward C. Banfield/Basic Books/$15.95

Thomas Main

A good deal of Edward Banfield's hotly debated new book—*The Democratic Muse: Visual Arts and the Public Interest*—is devoted to a history of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and other publicly supported arts programs. It is impossible to read these chapters without becoming a bit cynical about government aid for the arts. Certainly one can only laugh at some of the "artworks" the NEH ends up supporting ("a loop tour of Western U.S. . . . dripping ink from Hayley, Idaho to Cody, Wyoming—an event commemorating the birthplaces of Ezra Pound and Jackson Pollock"). Further, it is annoying to hear the flimsy justifications for government sponsorship: Art can help promote world peace, museums can help solve the urban crisis and improve race relations, academic humanists and artists deserve to be supported at the same level as scientists, and so on.

Such a history lends at least a certain plausibility to the policy option Banfield supports—a total cutoff of all direct and indirect government support of the arts. Like the horror stories that come out of the Pentagon about screwdrivers costing thousands of dollars, Banfield's book ought at least to serve the useful purpose of keeping arts bureaucrats on their toes. But a position as radical as Banfield's cannot rest on anecdotes; it requires a similarly radical argument on its behalf, which is what Banfield devotes most of this book to.

Banfield begins by defining art as "that which has the capacity to engender in a receptive viewer an aesthetic experience." Banfield makes no argument for choosing this definition from among the many others that have been made, although he does quote four philosophers (Dewey, Vivas, Dickie, and Goodman) in support of it—an unconvincing device, since it would be easy enough to come up with four other philosophers who support some other definition. He claims there are four types of aesthetic experience, each of which corresponds to one of four types of art: ideational, romantic, transcendental, and nihilist, but he does not say what common, purely "aesthetic" characteristics they share.

His next step is to argue that in order to justify public support of the arts, art *qua* art must somehow be relevant to the public interest. If some incidental, "non-aesthetic" aspect of art makes it of public value, this does not justify an arts program. That is, if art is useful as welfare, therapy, or as an educational tool, there may be a case for supporting welfare, therapy, or education, but not an independent arts program. To quote Banfield: ". . . A justification for government support of art must rest on the inherent rather than the incidental values associated with it—aesthetic experience that is." And Banfield is very careful to separate art so defined from all these other activities. For example, he decries the fact that "much of the public has been taught to see art as part of . . . [the] history of culture, rather than as something to be responded to aesthetically," as if there were a sharp distinction between cultural history and aesthetic experience.

Finally, Banfield suggests throughout the book that aesthetic feelings, whatever they may be, are relevant only to individual pleasure or welfare. The following passage is characteristic:

> If aesthetic experience contributed significantly to the welfare (however defined) of large numbers of individuals, it would not necessarily follow that it would serve the public interest. Many activities contribute to welfare in this sense without being of concern from a public as opposed to private standpoint. If, for example, the playing of chess afforded deep satisfaction to almost everyone, probably no one would claim that the playing of chess is therefore in the public interest.

In other words, whatever beneficial effects art has (assuming it has any, something of which Banfield is not convinced), they are purely private in that they do nothing to inculcate publicly useful virtues. Banfield accordingly opposes all government support of the arts. "Affording enjoyment to people is not a proper function of organizations serving the common good, whether they be private—foundations, for example—or public."

But there is a way to bring art to the people, in Banfield's view. For what it's worth, Banfield puts forward the following suggestion, more as a rhetorical device than as a real policy option. In the chapter that has provoked the most controversy, "Collectibles versus Art," Banfield claims that modern technology makes it possible to produce near-perfect copies of a great many artworks. Since a copy, in his view, can be visually the same as the original, it is also the same aesthetically: ". . . It is evident that a copy may be, for most or even all

Thomas J. Main writes frequently on public policy issues.

Marva Collins—the lady upsetting the NEA, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the assorted fat cats of our bloated educational bureaucracy.

Marva Collins is a black schoolteacher in Chicago, whose only crime is her extraordinary success in teaching ghetto children—labeled "hopeless" by the professional social workers—how to read and write. In the April 1983 issue of *The American Spectator*, Rita Kramer reported on Mrs. Collins's fine work, noting her insistence on standards and diligence, comparing her to other famous classroom innovators of the past. This article—offered as a reprint—is *must* reading for teachers, principals, administrators, or just parents concerned about the education their children are receiving. This reprint is especially timely as "Excellence in Education" enters its second year.

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viewers, aesthetically of equal value to the original."

Why then, according to Banfield, do critics frown on reproductions and museums insist on acquiring only originals? Because critics and museums are not interested in art. Museums care only about acquiring expensive collectibles, about becoming "repositories of grandeur," rather than about providing the public with opportunities for aesthetic experiences. People who go to these museums come away thinking that art has something to do with being rare and expensive; they may never learn that art is really about aesthetic feelings. Writes Banfield: "It would not be unduly cynical to say that many of the thousands who stood in line for a ten-second look at [Rembrandt's] *Aristotle Contemplating a Bust of Homer,* after the Metropolitan Museum paid $2.3 million to acquire it, would as willingly have stood to see the $2.3 million in cash." So in fact, far from helping develop an enlightened citizenry, museums are actually destroying the public's aesthetic sensibilities, something that can hardly be in the public interest. "Aesthetic experiences" could, in principle, be supplied by copies.

Banfield's argument must stand or fall on his characterization of art, rather than on the policy issues he discusses. He is against funding of the arts because art is the engendering of aesthetic feelings, and aesthetic feelings are private, and can't therefore serve the public interest. But this entirely unnecessary foray into aesthetics is highly questionable, certainly at least as questionable as some of the arguments for support of the arts that Banfield so disdainfully rejects.

It may be true that many museums suffer from a mania for acquisitions, but let us return to the Rembrandt. Suppose it is possible (as it probably is not) to produce an absolutely perfect reproduction of it. Would the way we react to these two paintings be the same? Assuming we know by some means which is the original (and this is a fair assumption since Banfield is not recommending that reproductions be passed off as originals), the answer is no.

For suppose that the copy had been made by a well-known contemporary artist, say Andy Warhol or the California "body artist," Chris Burden. Obviously, in this case the two paintings—even though physically identical—would be two essentially different works of art: one a work of the esteemed Dutch school, the other a Dada-esque joke. This is not an incidental difference—the whole character of the painting as a work of art would change.

Of course, Banfield is not suggesting that the copies be made by well-known contemporary artists. But the point is that physical appearance is not, in principle, the only thing that makes a work of art what it is. If it were, then we ought not to react differently to the copy even in this extreme case. The original and the copy are two different works of art because we think about them in the terms of two very different cultures. Knowing that the copy is by a controversial modern artist merely changes the cultural context of the reproduction very obviously. But even if the copier were an anonymous button pusher in the Xerox corporation, we would still tend to think about the copy as a modern work of art. For example, one could think of the reproduction as a creation of the copier's art, rather than of Rembrandt's. Many viewers would be as struck by the wonder of the copying technology as by the original painter's skills. And if we do think about the copy in modern terms, we could raise all sorts of questions that don't come up with the original. We might ask, for example, why this particular painting was chosen for reproduction—perhaps because it is a challenge to reproduce. Indeed, the copy would be of interest primarily to "copy buffs" who would

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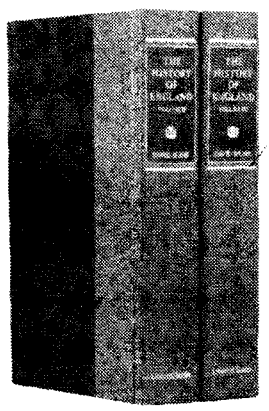

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give most of their attention to the quality of the copy, in the way that some stereo buffs care more about the performance of their equipment than about the music that is played on it. And even if one saw past these considerations to think of the copy as a product of Rembrandt's art, one would have arrived at that point only after a long chain of (potentially distracting) thoughts that the original does not suggest. And so the copy and the original would still be essentially different; they would be two different works of art.

Jorge Luis Borges dramatizes this point in his short story, "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote." Menard is a twentieth-century author who "rewrites" *Don Quixote* for modern readers, but without changing a word. Nonetheless, the two identical texts are taken to have entirely different meanings since readers interpret Menard's version in the context of modern thought, while the original is understood as a product of sixteenth-century Spain.

All this suggests that Banfield is wrong to make such a sharp distinction between art *qua* art (or, as he thinks, aesthetic feelings) and art as part of the history of culture. There is no strictly "aesthetic" aspect of a work of art that is independent of the culture and history from which the work comes. It further suggests that Banfield is wrong to think of our responses to art as purely private feelings. Looking at a painting, say, necessarily gets us thinking about what other people have thought, and not just about the artist's own ideas, but about the whole set of ideas and values associated with the culture out of which it comes. And when we look at art in the context of a museum, its public character is even more clear. For going to a museum is not a matter of having a string of discrete "aesthetic experiences." It necessarily involves thinking about the history of culture—usually the history of our (Western) culture.

So art, even purely *qua* art, definitely has a public character. But is it as such at all relevant to developing a more enlightened citizenry? This is Banfield's touchstone for determining whether it is relevant to the public interest. It is, of course, a truism that one can understand where we are now only if one has some idea of how we got here. It is on this assumption that no one seriously doubts the importance of teaching history—among other things—in the public schools. And, contra Banfield, it is on broadly the same ground that one can justify public support of the arts. For while the schools teach one aspect of history—who did what when—the museum introduces its audience to another aspect: What the most creative minds of the past felt about who did what when.

It is not necessarily true that citizens with such a "better" understanding of our culture will be any more committed to it or appreciative of it than they otherwise would be. It is possible that at least some people, on really understanding the culture they live with, will feel more alienated from it than they otherwise would be. In such cases one may at least say that historically informed alienation is more "socially valuable"—because it amounts to an informed criticism—than an alienation based on ignorance. However that may be, it is my hunch—and it is only a hunch, as unprovable as its opposite—that the more perspective one has on contemporary Western culture, the more likely one is to extend it at least that measure of respect necessary to keep it and the good things about it alive. In short, museums are one of the institutions which can help inculcate a measure of respect and support (critical support, admittedly) to the values and the culture that made its contents possible. It is in this way that they can con-

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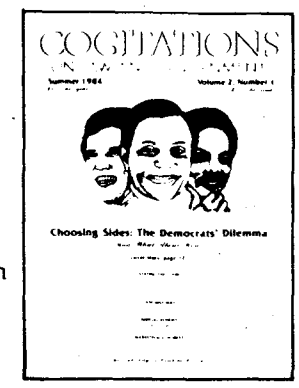

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tribute to the development of a competent citizenry.

Banfield half anticipates this response in his chapter on the history of the museum. He argues that museums once did try to function as institutions for inculcating the values of our culture, but failed. As he writes, "The art museum was founded soon after the Civil War as part of a long struggle by the Protestant elite, which ran the large cities, to moralize their populations by eliminating vice and inculcating civic virtues . . . With the rapid growth of the cities, the futility of these efforts became apparent."

Certainly the American Victorians were bound to be disappointed if they felt that museums could cure the pathologies of the urban masses. Such an impossibly crude conception of what art can do was bound to be refuted. But it hardly follows—as Banfield seems to think it does—that museums have entirely lost their public character and turned into playthings for the rich and obsessive art collectors. For whatever criticisms one might make about the funding or acquisitions policies of museums, the fact is that the public is very little affected by them. To the average viewer, a museum provides a vision of what we are sometimes capable of. That we have come to doubt whether such an experience makes for more competent citizens suggests not so much the uselessness of museums, but the degradation that has befallen our idea of what a citizen is. □

STRATEGY AND DIPLOMACY 1870-1945

Paul Kennedy/Allen and Unwin/$24.95

Eliot A. Cohen

Paul Kennedy is one of those infrequent modern scholars who is both prolific and deeply read in many subjects. The author of three major works in the past decade or so—*The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery, The Realities Behind Diplomacy,* and *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914*—he possesses a rare taste for the big questions of military power and foreign policy. He has pursued those interests in this latest book—a collection of eight separate essays—with lucidity and occasionally with insight.

It is worth noting that Kennedy was recently hired away from Great Britain to teach at Yale—the first time in several decades that a leading American university has hired a historian of strategic affairs. Harvard, meanwhile, has established what appears to be the first endowed chair in Military and National Security Affairs at a premier academic institution. Other universities are following suit. The market for younger students of strategy (particularly political scientists) is improving steadily, as are scholarly outlets for publication. The military services themselves have again begun paying attention to the historical study of strategic problems, witness the fine series emerging from the Fort Leavenworth Combat Studies Institute. Even the public seems more interested in serious studies of military questions, as seen in the widespread attention given the first volume in the Army's official history of the Vietnam war.

One reason for this trend is growing concern with the relative decline of American power. A similar sense pervades Kennedy's work, except that his concern is the decline of British power—how it came about and how British statesmen controlled and managed it. Thus the appeal of his writings stems not merely from the attractiveness of competently written, broad-brush history, but from our uneasy sense that the phenomenon he describes has relevance for us today.

The decline of British power in this century is a topic at once fascinating and perplexing. On the one hand, the Empire summoned forth titanic efforts in two world wars; at its peak it covered nearly a quarter of the globe's land surface; its proconsuls and soldiers projected an image of unshakable self-confidence, unshakable because it seemed so well grounded in fact. On the other hand, the Empire strikes one in retrospect as extraordinarily fragile—indeed, so it seemed to far-sighted contemporaries. The English were ever a parochial race, and many took little interest in imperial affairs. The frailest of politico-military webs held the provinces together—scarcely 50,000 white soldiers in India and few administrators (that masterpiece of administration, the Indian Civil Service, numbered barely 1,000 men). Even at the height of imperial power precipient statesmen quivered inwardly at Kipling's 1897 poem, "Recessional," which foretold the day when "Far-called, our navies melt away;/On dune and headland sinks the fire:/Lo, all our pomp of yesterday/Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."

Kennedy's basic view in *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870-1945* is that decline came no sooner than necessary. This theme is obscured somewhat by the book's format. As might be expected in a collection of essays written over the course of ten or so years, the author sometimes wanders from the point, making excursions into the study of arms races (which do *not,* as he and others have observed, cause wars) and Japanese imperial strategy. But his primary focus is on the British Empire in its last phase, when commitments accumulated and capabilities seemed inadequate, when the requirements of power grew beyond the resources available to meet them. He observes that relative to other powers, particularly Germany, Russia, and the United States, Great Britain was in decline from about the last third of the nineteenth century on. For the most part he makes this seem a matter of economics plain and simple: The British economy, though growing slowly, was being rapidly outstripped by the new and emerging powers of Europe and the world. Since wealth provides the sinews of war, declining relative wealth means, ultimately, declining power.

At times Kennedy retreats from the simplicity of this argument. In an unsettling essay "Why Did the British Empire Last So Long?" he admits that historians may have gone too far in positing an ineluctable decline of a century or more. He refers to other elements of the problem—e.g., the changing balance of sea and land power (in an essay on "Mahan versus Mackinder: Two Interpretations of British Sea Power"), or the growth of African and Asian nationalism, and changing patterns of relations among the Empire's Great Power enemies—but he returns again and again to the problem of economics and power.

His analysis leads him to conclude that the British prolonged the Empire's existence beyond its natural term, and cushioned its inevitable collapse, through the adroit use of appeasement. On the book's penultimate page he writes:

> The final irony, then, is this—and perhaps Mr. Reagan and Mr. Andropov, now presiding over their own declining empires, may take note. A century ago, alarmed by what they sensed as new threats to their country's world position, a significant segment of British opinion called—and thereafter never ceased calling—for hard-nosed policies to check foreign rivals, to protect British industry and markets, to turn their Empire into a self-contained armed camp. At the same time, they never

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ceased complaining of the weak, compromising, appeasing policies of Mr. Gladstone, of the flaccid stance of Salisbury and the languid reactions of Balfour, of Asquith's refusal to face the facts and Baldwin's unwillingness to make hard but necessary decisions.

In certain respects, of course, the imperialists and the anti-appeasers were correct: on specific issues, British governments made wrong decisions, indulged in wishful thinking, failed to take full advantage of a given situation. But in the longer-term perspective—on the fundamental issue of how to preserve a worldwide Empire for as long as possible once the economic and strategical tides had turned—was not this flexible, reasonable, compromise-seeking policy preferable to the assertive 'no surrender' one?

His point is not without merit. In the late nineteenth century the British accommodated American national interests whenever they could; they concluded an entente with their French rivals, and even made an effort to come to terms with the Russians, who posed a considerable threat to India. British appeasement before World War I, therefore, enabled the formation of the great alliance which eventually won the war. The story of postwar appeasement (before the term acquired its current evil connotation) is well known. But surely, one can argue, it made sense to reincorporate pre-Hitler Germany into European politics; moreover, after 1933 and until at least the Rhineland crisis even Churchill favored appeasement, albeit only from a position of strength.

Nonetheless, Kennedy's argument is historically inadequate and deeply misleading. Appeasement was indeed one pillar for a policy of imperial decline, but so too was a strategy of strength. The reassertion of British naval power in the late nineteenth century (which Kennedy discusses briefly in an interesting essay, "Fisher and Tirpitz Compared"), the threatened use of force (at Fashoda in 1898, for example, or earlier in the Far Eastern Crises), and the real use of force bolstered British power as well.

This last is particularly important. The British Empire, even in its declining years, was adroit in the arts of limited war and imperial policing. Though many of its interwar campaigns are now forgotten (the suppression of the Iraqi revolt in the 1920s, for instance, or the campaigns in northern India in 1937), such actions enabled the British to control a huge and vulnerable empire. The Boer War—in which appeasement *followed* victory—bore witness to the lengths the British were willing to go to keep their grip.

In addition, the Realpolitik justification for appeasement reflected as much a short-sighted unwillingness to bear heavy burdens as it did an acceptance of reality. It might well have been terribly expensive to create a first-class air force and an effective mechanized army during the 1930s, yet such instruments of power might have enabled the British to forestall much greater expenditures (and horrific bloodshed) in the 1940s, might, indeed, have enabled the Empire to survive the war more or less intact. Had the British people been willing to accept conscription before the First World War they might have shortened that cataclysm considerably, by putting first-class armies on the continent a year or two before they actually did. Kennedy is not a crude economic determinist, to be sure, but he often seems willing to accept the judgment of temperamentally anxious and fearful Treasury officials, who always were ready to explain why one more military measure would bankrupt the nation.

Kennedy's realism—based as it is on a straightforward assessment of economic war potential—obscures the role of ideology in international politics. It made some sense to appease Weimar Germany; it made no sense to appease Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. For that matter, it is far from clear

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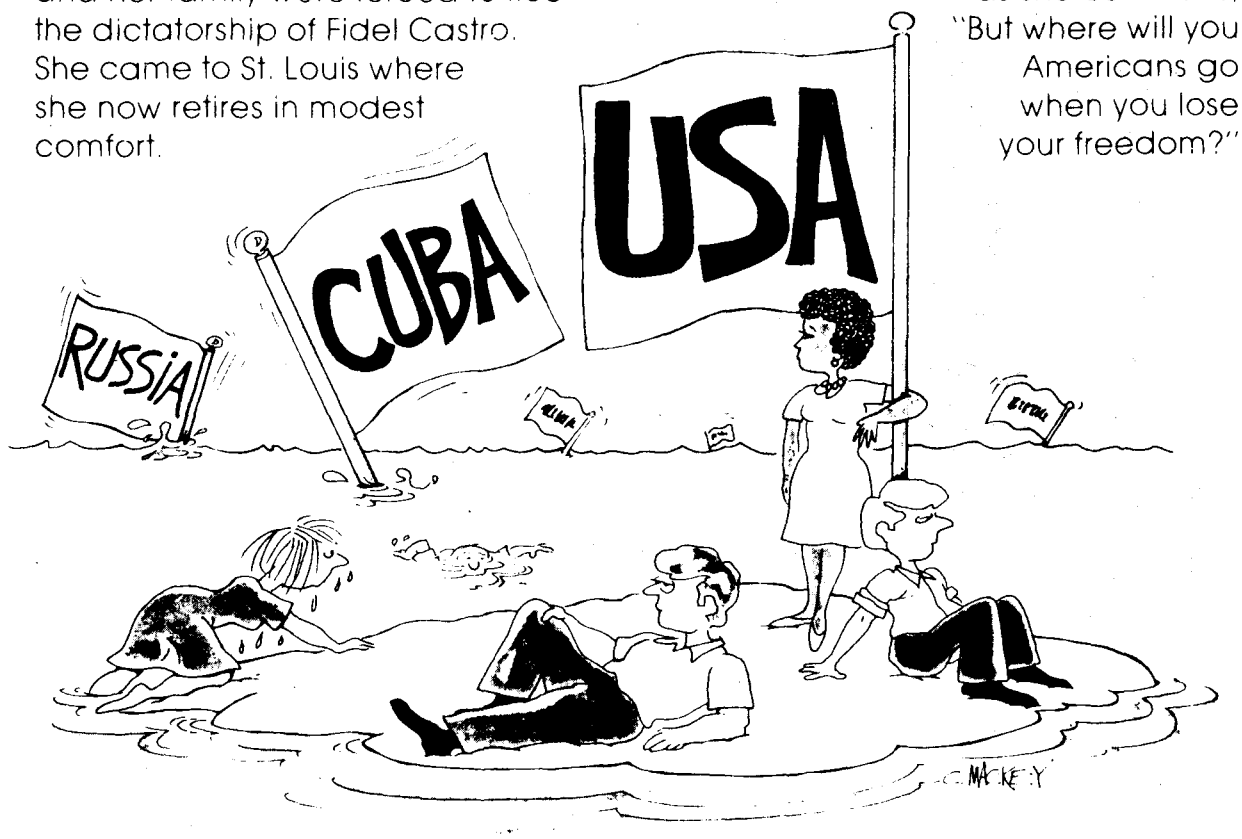

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that Wilhelmian Germany was an "appeasable" state, unlike either the United States or France at that time. A state with unlimited goals, which aims for world hegemony, cannot be accommodated, and it is foolish to think otherwise. Appeasement of the Munich variety was advocated in the name of "realism," of a sophisticated and unsentimental assessment of world politics. This would suggest that it is as much a requirement of statesmanship to recognize when Realpolitik is inadequate as it is to know when it is invaluable.

For this reason one wishes Kennedy had made an effort to compare the strategy of Great Britain's rise with that of its fall. It is at this earlier stage, the time of first the Elder and then the Younger Pitt, that one sees a sounder view of world politics. The same statesmen who favored appeasement in North America—Burke preeminent among them—favored stubborn, unreasonable, and prolonged struggle with revolutionary and Napoleonic France, for they understood the difference between national revolutions with limited aims, and those with unlimited aims.

Kennedy's analysis is even more dubious if applied without reservation to the contemporary United States. While it is necessary that the U.S. understand the very real limits on its power, and the relative decline of that power in the world, we must also bear in mind the differences between our position and that of the British during the first half of this century. Unlike theirs, our economy remains strong and creative; our primary opponents, in contrast to theirs, are shackled by economic systems that create wealth slowly if at all. Our empire is an even looser one than theirs, and far less hampered by the need for direct administration of our dependencies.

Even so, I hasten to add, there is much to be learned from the late British imperial period. Few would deny the relevance of such striking parallels as the tensions between maritime strategies and continental commitments, and between liberal values and imperial necessities. One only wishes that so learned and eloquent a historian as Paul Kennedy had addressed these issues in depth. But at least we can be grateful to him for having raised them. □

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BAD NEWS: THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE *NEW YORK TIMES*
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If journalism is the first rough draft of history, then Russ Braley has composed a second and considerably amended version. He has done a monumental amount of work, written a big book (679 pages), and has performed us a great service. Unfortunately *Bad News* is not likely to receive the attention it deserves, because the authors of the first draft not only are very much still with us, but today occupy the most influential editorial posts, and they are not likely to be enthusiastic about this revision of their youthful dispatches from the field.

Braley's canvas is large—primarily U.S. foreign policy in the years 1945-75—and his main purpose is to correct some of the more conspicuous errors and misinterpretations of the first drafters. Here and there we find hints that he may include himself among the misinterpreters. For over twenty years he was foreign correspondent for the *New York Daily News*, mostly in Europe. At one point in his absorbing reconstruction of the Kennedy-Khrushchev Vienna summit, for example, he observes in a footnote that, having asked a sensible question at a press conference dealing with the U.S. non-response to the building of the Berlin Wall, he was "chastised" by the speaker, Dean Rusk.

In any event, Braley was involved in the initial reporting of some of the events that he describes, and he is understandably eager to set the record straight. I do not mean to suggest that he has an axe to grind. This is the kind of book that journalists almost never write in their retirement, and I suspect that it was his personal involvement in some of these events that gave Braley the energy needed to pursue the daunting task of revising history and opposing fashion.

Braley wants us to know that the heavy guns of journalism—in particular those of the *New York Times*—could overpower less audible but sometimes more accurate dispatches—for example those of Marguerite Higgins of the *New York Herald Tribune*. (The "Halberstam-Higgins War" took place in Vietnam in 1963, but one suspects something very analogous may be going on in El Salvador today.) Sometimes the big guns, like Sherlock Holmes's dog, were silent. James Reston in essence knew that Kennedy had capitulated to Khrushchev in 1961, but maintained a discreet silence on the topic in his column.

Braley concludes that the *New York Times*, in the period under consideration, in fact subordinated a policy of objective reporting to an ideology or preconceived worldview. This ideology in turn seeped into the reporting from the field. Writes Braley:

> Some of the *Times* correspondents rank with the world's best, but they cannot run the newspaper from the field, and they don't always fit into management positions. The correspondents became hostage to the *Times'* slide into ideology. In the home office and Washington bureau, John Oakes of the editorial page, columnists Reston, Wicker and the two Lewises, editors of the magazine, *Book Review* and later *Times* books, offered upcoming *Times* staffers the key to advancement. Everyone on the staff understood what was wanted after the promotions of Herbert Matthews and David Halberstam.

Braley's analysis of this ideology is interesting. It "appears to derive from two nightmares," he writes. "Fear of a Fascist takeover in Washington. And fear of a Jacquerie by the underprivileged. The Fascists are to be combatted and the mob placated." Moreover, "*Times* editors appear to see the Third World and black Americans in the same picture frame, to be placated, patted on the head, solicited, so they won't rise up in bloody revolt against privilege."

As a result, the *Times* became "the champion of any and all revolutions," and went out of its way to "deny any distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes . . . all authoritarians must be deposed, to quell Fascism and placate the revolution," while leaders to be preserved "have included Castro, Mugabe, Ho Chi Minh, the Alexander Dubcek group, Janos Kadar, Wladyslaw Gomulka and Erich Honecker."

But as we can see from the foregoing, the *Times* has in fact made a distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, because it consistently assaults the former and defends the latter. A failure to have noticed the distinction would have produced an inconsistent pattern of support. Thus it seems to me that the *Times*'s ideology can be more simply characterized. One need not postulate guilt-ridden editors throwing worried glances back at the South Bronx and Harlem as they flee to Scarsdale. One may simply posit that the *Times* is consistently pro-socialist, always trying to get a little bit more of it at home, and

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constructing excuses for those countries that are dominated by it abroad—that is, countries controlled by the Soviet Union.

My impression, for what it is worth, is that things have been slowly changing at the *Times* in the last few years, especially in its news division. Some of its foreign reporters are now plainly anti-Communist (Alexander Cockburn unfailingly identifies them for us in his press column), as is the executive editor, Abe Rosenthal. The *Times*'s editorial pages remain left-wing, however, and in this the paper seems to be running counter to a media trend, if that is what it is, of "news" based on essentially leftist premises, combined with editorials tinged with a mild conservatism. (The *Washington Post* is frequently this way.)

Anyway, do get Braley's book. It's a page-turner, quite apart from anything else, and I found the section on the Cuban revolution, with Herbert Matthews acting as Castro's P.R. man on the front page of the *New York Times,* to be of exceptional interest. Central America correspondents Alan Riding and Raymond Bonner have continued in the apologist tradition established by the *Times*'s prewar Moscow correspondent, Walter Duranty, but even they pale by comparison with Matthews. □

HORACE'S COMPROMISE: THE DILEMMA OF THE AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL
Theodore R. Sizer/Houghton Mifflin/$16.95

AGAINST MEDIOCRITY: THE HUMANITIES IN AMERICA'S HIGH SCHOOLS
Edited by Chester E. Finn, Jr., Diane Ravitch, and Robert T. Fancher/Holmes & Meier/$29.50; $11.50 paper

John R. Turner

The two books discussed here are units in the remarkable parade set off by the nation's belated discovery that American high schools are not exactly palaces of intellectual scintillation. One is considerably better than the other, but both address the same conditions and both are in general agreement about what ought to be done.

Observers of the public schools can be both grateful and relieved that Theodore Sizer has produced a readable and sensible book on education. One might expect something of a different character when he learns that *Horace's Compromise* is—forgive me but I must quote—"the first report from a study of high schools, cosponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Commission on Educational Issues of the National Association of Independent Schools."

Now there's an incantation to conjure up visions of grave-faced committees harrumphing their way to statistical inanity. But, lo and behold, *Horace's Compromise* is not a work of quantitative scientism but rather the straightforward report of the former headmaster of Phillips Academy who visited dozens of schools over a two-year period and is now telling us what he found.

His discoveries were not encouraging, at least not if one thinks that high school ought to foster intellectual development. The American high school of today—and this is true throughout the nation—is a youth-tending institution devoted to preserving "mediocre harmonies." The students are usually "docile, compliant, and without initiative." But society is generally satisfied because "the adolescents are supervised, safely and constructively most of the time during the morning and the afternoon hours, and they are off the labor market." And, in Mr. Sizer's judgment, "that is what high school is all about."

Sizer's thesis is that the average citizen is an unwitting participant in a conspiracy to keep the schools dull, flat, dreary, insipid, trivial, and monotonous. The students are the chief victims because they miss an opportunity to have their minds activated. But their teachers also are mistreated and forced to live with the knowledge that they cannot do good work because the conditions of their employment won't permit it.

The Horace of Sizer's title is not the Latin poet, nor the eccentric proprietor of Strawberry Hill, nor even the nineteenth-century educational reformer. Horace, in fact, isn't even a real person. He's a composite figure, a 53-year-old English teacher in a pretty good suburban school whose working conditions are more pleasant than average. Horace knows he is a lot better off than his counterparts who labor in the inner cities. Actually, he feels fairly lucky. And he is content, after a fashion. Yet he also knows he is teaching his students almost nothing.

His ineffectiveness derives from a schedule that has him rushing all week long from one task to another. Horace meets 120 students a day. He assigns them one theme a week, and figures he can spend an average of five minutes reading, correcting, and commenting on each paper. His entire existence is chopped into units so restrictive that the idea of genuine reflection becomes ridiculous. He is the embodiment of busy-work.

All one need do is follow Horace around for a couple of days to see why the schools are intellectually enervating. His harried, droopy life is the focus of the problem. As Sizer says: "Without good teachers, sensibly deployed, schooling is barely worth the effort." Horace may or may not have the potential to be a good teacher, but he is clearly not sensibly deployed.

The causes of Horace's predicament are evident to Sizer: parental indifference and the vested interests of a voracious educational bureaucracy. On the evils of the latter Sizer could not be more explicit: "The existing hierarchies are comfortable for the people at the top of school bureaucracy and for their influential colleagues in the university with whom they are interlocked in a variety of training-to-license programs. There is money in the hierarchy."

Equally manifest to Sizer are the corrective measures that ought to be taken. Society, he says, has a right to demand a certain level of education in each of its citizens. But it makes no sense to exact this duty by prescribing the same stint of schooling for everyone. What we are justified in expecting are literacy, numeracy, and civic understanding, simple standards which can be met by fewer than twelve years of school attendance. Once a student has shown that he has satisfied these claims, or, I suppose, that he is incapable of satisfying them, no further schooling should be required.

This is not an elitist argument to abandon the children of the poor. A consistent motif throughout *Horace's Compromise* is the author's disgust with the way less privileged children are now treated by the schools. In fact, he goes so far as to say that the single variable which makes a genuine difference in the schools is the social class from which students come. Sizer believes in the dictum coined by Robert Hutchins, that the best education for the best is the best education for all. Implicit in his reservations about compulsory schooling is the expectation that once liberated from onerous bureaucratic requirements the schools would become inviting enough to attract most of the students who now attend unwillingly.

If the upper grades of the public schools were thereby freed from their baby-sitting function, they could then turn their attention to the intellectual development of the students who remained. And from these youngsters much more could be expected than is now the case. They would have to learn more while being taught less. As Sizer rightly proclaims, "their personal engagement with their own learning is crucial; adults cannot 'give them an education.'"

Furthermore, with an engaged student body, the schools could finally face the truth that an education which does not include "education in character" is scarcely worth the name. Americans have traditionally expected schools to stand for certain values, but the takeover of the educational establishment by social-scientific hierarchies has fostered the shallow belief that values can be completely separated from their religious roots. This, announces Sizer, is simply "whistling in the dark." Presumably, if the schools were capable of dealing with subtleties, basic moral questions could be discussed without the frothing at the mouth which now accompanies any hint of a religious issue.

Alas, when Sizer raised the possibilities of these reforms with Horace, he did not get an enthusiastic response. Horace knows that the schools are paralyzed, but he has little faith they can be enlivened, and he is intensely fearful that any change will work against him. Sizer doesn't come right out and say so, but the implication is fairly clear that lurking within Horace's puny soul is something close to love for Big Brother.

At one point Sizer asks, "Can an ungenerous and irresponsible adult culture long get away with preaching virtue to its young?" The whole of *Horace's Compromise* can be read as an answer to the question. And with a final chapter entitled "A Paralysis of Imagination," the answer is clear.

Sizer's analysis, however, is probably too gloomy, because it overestimates the importance of formal schooling in adolescent development. Young people who want to learn have plenty of opportunities outside of schools, and obviously, many take advantage of them. It may be that the high school is becoming, like numerous other elements of government, an additional component of the

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social detritus, maintained because people can't think how to get rid of it. If that's the case, the high school will gradually come to be of major interest only to governmental economists and the bureaucrats who draw their salaries from it. If, however, it is to be reformed, and again perform functions vital to the life of the mind, Sizer's prescriptions will be a good place to start. I recommend *Horace's Compromise* to anyone still believing there is hope for the schools.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about *Against Mediocrity*. This is a collection of sixteen essays treating the teaching of the humanities in high school. Five of them are worth reading whereas the others exemplify, in varying degree, the quality they claim to be against.

Five out of sixteen is pretty good when one considers how this book came into being. Vanderbilt University has an Institute for Public Policy Studies which sponsors an Educational Excellence Network. A while back this network was given a stack of the taxpayers' dollars by the National Endowment for the Humanities (that's how NEH Chairman William Bennett came to write the introduction) and spent it on conferences held in Atlanta and Denver in the spring of 1983 and attended by assorted teachers, professors, and school officials.

Conferences, of course, have to be addressed. So the conference organizers selected a number of educational thinkers to deliver papers on the teaching of the humanities in the high schools. And these discourses, duly revised in the light of editorial advice and commentary at the conferences, have now been made into a book.

The most sprightly of the five essays I can recommend to general readers is "The Intellectual Lives of Teachers" by Edwin J. Delattre, the president of St. John's College in Annapolis. Mr. Delattre gets to the heart of the teacher problem with a succinct statement of his theme: "It is the fate of narrow minds to be the victims of fashion—or worse, the perpetrators of it." The fundamental weakness of our educational system is that it does not attract well-read, imaginative persons into its ranks. Since American society has not taken the trouble to ask itself what teachers should know or how they should learn it, it is not surprising that our schools are staffed mostly by intellectual plodders. No level of pedagogical skill or administrative acumen can make up for empty, conventional thought about history, literature, philosophy, and modern world culture. The first requirement of school reform must be teachers and principals who love learning so much they are driven to have it for themselves. In the absence of that basic change, says Delattre, other measures will be futile.

Leon Botstein, the president of Bard College, contributes an explanation of why, and how, Bard has made writing the foundation of its core curriculum. In what he calls the three pedagogical approaches to language—the philosophical, the etymological, and the aesthetic—Botstein finds the underpinning for all humanistic study. His commitment to language is undeterred by erosive developments in contemporary culture. As he says: "If the roots of the decline in literary interest and clear and powerful thinking among students are beyond the school, then the school must confront those deeper roots by addressing the challenge of motivating the student to employ the language in the first place."

Jon Moline, professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin, offers an enlightening discussion of the difficulties teachers face in becoming genuine professionals. "Professional" as it is generally used is one of the biggest cant words now going, but Professor Moline manages, through careful definition, to restore some integrity to it, and to convince one that it would be a good thing for teachers to become more professional than they are.

In "Teacher Education and the Predicaments of Reform," Gary Sykes, a former official of the National Institute for Education, gives a convincing review of recent attempts to revamp the education of teachers. These efforts were crippled by the inability of the various organizations responsible for teacher training to forgo games of one-upmanship. This deplorable situation is unlikely to change soon, but Sykes thinks there are opportunities for single institutions to make headway against the stultifying crowd. He calls for heroic action by individual schools and teachers, not a very hopeful formula for widespread change but perhaps the only practical option we have.

The final entry on my list of the worthy five is by Peter Greer, superintendent of schools in Portland, Maine. Mr. Greer echoes Edwin Delattre in arguing that teachers will not improve instruction in the humanities until they are led by administrators who themselves know what the humanities are. So long as "in-service" training concentrates on "how-to" issues and neglects the material to be taught, teachers will recognize that humanistic learning is to be supported only by lip service. Greer's solution is for community leaders to insist on substance from school officials, and if that's similar to a directive to pull up your socks and sit up straight, it's still probably useful.

The worm at the core of discursive fruits such as these—and it has eaten away at the eleven I didn't discuss more destructively than at the five sketched here—is that they tend to be offered as solutions to a problem that doesn't exist. The intellectual lassitude of the majority of people is not a puzzle to be worked out, it's just a fact.

It's true that determined public action might raise test scores a few points, and that would be fine. But it wouldn't turn the world around. Nobody wants to write truthfully about what's possible in education because there wouldn't be much drama in it.

That is also why treatises on education are usually dull. The two volumes outlined here are better than average, and Mr. Sizer's considerably so. The latter gains its quality by containing an unusual number of stories about what actually happened in schools. That, in itself, should be a good lesson for educators. □

LOVE AND DEATH IN A HOT COUNTRY

Shiva Naipaul/Viking/$14.95

George Sim Johnston

Ever since Sir Walter Raleigh drifted three hundred miles up the Orinoco River and came back to write of "a country that hath yet her maidenhead, never sacked, turned, nor wrought," British Guyana has been a favorite of touring literary mandarins. Evelyn Waugh passed through in the early thirties; by then, of course, the country had been debauched by various colonial powers; he spent a few harrowing months in the bush and returned with the inspiration for his best novel, *A Handful of Dust*. Almost 50 years later, after Jim Jones and his followers had passed around the Fla-Vor-Aid (a holocaust which at least corrected the impression abroad that the country was located in Africa), Shiva Naipaul was among the mob of journalists and Third World aficionados who flew in for the media wrap-up. Naipaul was quick to see that Jonestown was not the only story down there. Guyana itself was a bizarre place. There was, of course, the usual blend of corruption and social comedy which makes post-colonial societies such a lark for journalists and novelists: the semi-literate ministers racing around in limousines, the curfews and black markets and waterless toilets, the handful of Europeans left drinking in the shadows. But there was also Guyana's political life, a potent brew of farce and tragedy even by the standards of the region. The country, in fact, provided an object lesson of what happens when a run-of-the-mill political strongman suddenly gets his head turned by Marxism and Third World liberationist rhetoric.

Guyana was granted independence in the mid-sixties, and, with the help of the CIA and the British Colonial Office, Forbes Burnham, a black racialist bully boy, took over as Prime Minister and settled in for what seemed the usual run of equatorial corruption. Elections were rigged, political opposition was snuffed, and the army was turned into Mr. Burnham's private goon squad; but the country remained relatively prosperous and citizens were free to go about their business so long as they did not criticize the Big Chief. In 1970, however, Burnham, who until then had been an oddly regressive neocolonial, gave in to intellectual fashion and became a born-again Marxist along the lines of Dr. Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. He converted Guyana into something called a Cooperative Socialist Republic. At first, as Mr. Naipaul reports in his brilliant book, *Journey to Nowhere* (1981), the only concrete result was that ministers and civil servants began to sign their correspondence "Yours cooperatively . . ." But what the Big Chief had in mind was soon made clear. The constitution was gutted so that even rigged elections were no longer a necessity. "Freedom of the press" was redefined, Cuban-style, as the right to publish only news which helped the "class struggle," i.e., which buttressed the regime. Businesses were nationalized and pillaged. Paramilitary organizations (never referred to in the American press as "death squads,"

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presumably because they worked for a left-wing regime) went around assassinating people. And in the attempt to create the new Guyana Man, thousands of young people were forced into brutal labor camps in the interior. It was a classic transition from right-wing authoritarianism to left-wing totalitarianism, and the results were the same as they have been in Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and other Third World countries which have gone this route: The people became poorer; the new ruling elite was more arbitrary and brutal than the one it replaced; lawlessness increased; and anyone with education or technical skills made a rush for the airport. Marx, after all, did predict that the imposition of socialism on an undeveloped country would lead to further impoverishment while reinforcing feudal social structures.

Naipaul not only covered Guyana and Jonestown, but also went to California to interview the left-wingers who had championed Jim Jones to the bitter end. Some had made credulous pilgrimages to Jonestown, proclaimed it a marvelous example of the workings of "dialectical materialism," and interfered with attempts of concerned relatives to find out what was really going on down there. After the massacre, Naipaul found, most of them either absolved themselves of any complicity or developed a sudden amnesia on the subject. Like good socialists, they simply moved their search for the earthly paradise to other unlikely quarters. A few clung stubbornly to their admiration for Jones, claiming that the nine hundred deaths were the work of the CIA.

Realizing that he had strayed into a cloud cuckoo land, Naipaul poked further around the cultural fringes of California. He found that sixties-style political commitment had been largely replaced by a new ethic of "self-realization." Like many foreigners, Naipaul was amazed at the range of the technical vocabulary employed by the natives to describe various states of self-absorption, and the second half of *Journey to Nowhere* is worth reading just for the specimens of psycho-babble mounted in its pages. Naipaul was disturbed, however, by all this inward turning of the psyche. "The ideas float like ghosts. So do the men and women who cling to the ideas. A swirling vapor of assorted idealisms—ecology, feminism, heightened consciousness—clouds the brain. . . . You become your abstractions—a bio-energy mass, a set of relationships, a Growth Process, a higher-consciousness machine, a Gestalt. You can talk about the self as if it were an alien object." In the middle of the confusion stood the gurus, and Jim Jones's ministry, which attracted middle-class whites as well as poor blacks, was not difficult to explain.

Naipaul makes an alarming but apt analogy between the laid-back middle-class he encountered in California and the race of Eloi in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*. The Eloi play childish games and fashion garlands for one another in an Eden-like garden, but, as the Time Traveler eventually learns to his horror, they are hunted and eaten at night by the ravenous Morlocks, their mutant counterparts who live deep underground. Nations, as someone said, are born stoic and die epicurean.

I have dwelled on Naipaul's last book not only because *Journey to Nowhere* is one of the best books on the seventies I have come across, but also because his new novel, *Love and Death in a Hot Country,* can be read as a fictional gloss on its predecessor. The "hot country," called Cuyama, ". . . a tract of land perched uneasily on the sloping shoulder of South America . . . on the fringe of an Empire whose interests had always lain elsewhere," is clearly Guyana. The country is run by a gang of bandits who spout Marxist slogans, and, as the novel opens, the President has just announced, much as Burnham did, a People's Plebiscite, whose only purpose is to rewrite the Constitution so that the President and his party can permanently rule the country. But whatever the result of the plebiscite, the country has long since "passed beyond the stage of mere corruption. What was called corruption had blossomed into a transcendence of its own. Banditry, cynicism and lies had been made a way of life; become, it could be said, an ideology."

We see the country through the eyes of a rather hopeless couple, Aubrey and Dina St. Pierre. Aubrey is the scion of a Portuguese family which had once controlled a large estate but is now ruined. Aubrey is a well-meaning socialist, a patriot, a dilettante of guilt who tries to expiate the sins of his slave-owning forebears by embarking on various projects for the betterment of mankind. He runs a bookshop with a sign in the window which says "Books to Free the Mind and Gladden the Soul." He starts a progressive magazine which quickly folds; he writes impassioned letters to the London *Times*. He is one of those people who live by neat theoretical constructs and so always come to grief. Even his private relationships are lost in a haze of abstraction, and there are many bits of dialogue, such as this exchange with his mother, which seem to have strayed from Naipaul's California collection:

"Dina's probably suffering from a form of post-natal depression," he hazarded. ". . . It's a well-documented phenomenon, Mother. Not something I've invented."

"It's all nonsense and you know it."

Aubrey sighed. "It really isn't as bad as you say, Mother. Dina may not conform to the archetypal image of a mother. But then many modern women don't. Times have changed. Women are beginning to see themselves in a different light. Sexual stereotyping is breaking down . . ."

His mother broke into the smooth flow. "We were talking about Dina. Your wife. Remember?"

Aubrey is, in short, a kind of Eloi, a wimp who cannot see the forest for the trees; the only thing missing is a pair of cuckold horns; but, then, his wife does not have the energy. Dina is an enervated, somewhat cynical young woman whose main occupation seems to be blue afternoon moods. Unlike her husband, she is inured to the violence and corruption around her and does not want to hear about his melioristic schemes. She finds marriage and motherhood a bore, and so, like every wife in modern fiction, hunts around for a little psychic space. She reminds me of the heroine of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening,* only instead of swimming out to sea to drown in a state of pantheistic bliss, she settles for little walks around the festering city.

This is a political novel, a fictional guide to certain Third World realities, and it risks the usual pitfalls of journalism continued by other means. Politics in a work of literature, said Stendhal, is like a pistol shot at a concert. If the political ideas do not blend with the fictional landscape, the game is up. The novelist has to be careful that his characters do not turn into disembodied voices peddling various viewpoints. Naipaul's task is all the more difficult because instead of portraying the sort of revolutionaries found in Dostoyevsky and Malraux, who lend themselves to melodrama, he is dealing, in the person of Aubrey, with a pale and watery strain of liberalism. I think he brings it off—barely; Aubrey stands on his own feet as a fictional creation; but the subtitles (THE DOLT IS MAKING ANOTHER STUPID REMARK ABOUT THE THIRD WORLD) are sometimes large and glaring.

As a political type, Aubrey is fully realized. He is the kind of modern progressive whom Lionel Trilling characterized as being motivated by "an ever more imperious and bitter refusal to consent to the conditioned nature of human existence," whose real goal is "to do away with those defining elements of politics which are repugnant to reason and virtue, such as mere opinion, contingency, conflicts of interest and clashes of will and the compromises they lead to." Aubrey's sort cannot accept the fact that human affairs will never submit to a perfectly rational order; they want the technocrats to come in and clean everything up. Aubrey is, of course, impotent to do anything in phantasmagoric Cuyama; but the political mess around him is partly the result of a totalist mindset in which he himself remotely participates.

I have dwelt on politics, which, no doubt, would not please Mr. Naipaul, who has considerable novelistic gifts. Taken simply as a novel, the book is a mixed performance. The writing is tight and evocative; the milieu is made vivid without adjectival excess. The minor characters, especially Aubrey's journalist friend and his wife's servant girl, are masterfully done in a few strokes (the confrontation between Dina and her servant girl could stand alone as an excellent short story); and when the reader puts down this brief novel he has the sense of having been somewhere, a pleasure that is withheld by many acclaimed novels twice its length. The problems, though, are serious. The overly schematic use of the characters to illustrate the author's themes occasionally dispels the fictive cloud whose maintenance is a novelist's first duty. Also, the story really does not go anywhere. Retrospective back-filling—the origins of Aubrey and Dina's marriage, Dina's ghastly upbringing—takes up much of the limited narrative space. What we are left with in the present is the fact that Aubrey and Dina no longer get along, if they ever did, and that Aubrey is not getting anywhere with his silly ideas. The arrival on the scene of Aubrey's cynical journalist friend, Alex, provokes some good dialogue, a little soul searching, but little in the way of plot. Thirty pages into the novel, the reader will be looking forward to much more than is finally delivered.

Strictly speaking, *Love and Death in a Hot Country* is a long, beautifully written sketch, not a novel. Still, it is well worth reading both for its astute political observations and for its evocation of a sinister land "where the lies fall like rain." □

Coming

The Liberal Crack-Up

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PROJECTION

by Eric M. Breindel

In April, as a huge, albeit brief, hue and cry was raised about the use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war, the United States formally asked the Soviet Union to begin talks on a U.S.-proposed plan for a global ban on chemical weapons. This feeler was put out, despite the fact that Vice President Bush had just returned from a 40-nation U.N. special session on disarmament in Geneva, his ears still ringing with crass Soviet denunciations of the American plan. Arguably, the Vice President needn't even have made the trip. The official Soviet news agency, *Tass,* had assailed President Reagan's call for a global ban as a "propaganda trick"—before the specific terms of the proposed treaty were even unveiled.

Interestingly, senior State Department officials continued to expect an affirmative response to the invitation to enter into discussions. American officials reasoned that Moscow doesn't want to cede a propaganda advantage to the U.S. by rejecting mere talks out of hand. And Foggy Bottom's assessment was on the mark. Kenneth L. Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, told Congress in late June that Moscow had indeed indicated its willingness to begin negotiations. An actual treaty, needless to say, is quite another matter.

The Soviets, it seems clear—from the Olympic boycott to the Geneva missile talks—aren't likely to seek any sort of agreement with Washington this year, regarding chemical weapons or anything else, lest Moscow wind up bolstering President Reagan's re-election chances. That Moscow hasn't yet learned, from the West German elections, and from the readily apparent American popular response to the various Soviet "anti-Reagan" initiatives, that the result of such tactics has been to strengthen Reagan (or, previously, Helmut Kohl) is, in and of itself, curious—a noteworthy comment on Soviet perspicacity *vis-à-vis* Western electoral politics. What, after all, are Georgi Arbatov and his USA Institute doing with all their time and KGB money?

Still, it remains that Moscow will not endeavor seriously to negotiate a chemical weapons treaty with Washington during the course of this year.

Beyond electoral matters, the Soviets manifest no intention to reverse their traditional opposition to treaty verification by means of "on-site" inspection. And "open-invitation" on-site inspection is *the* essential ingredient in the American plan. Aerial photography, radar surveillance—and the various other verification techniques, generally termed, in Pentagon parlance, "national technical means"—are of doubtful efficacy in supervising already-negotiated limitations on missiles, bombers, and other weaponry. With regard to chemical weapons, appearing in the form of tiny cannisters, such methods of ensuring compliance are all but useless. In any event, on-site inspection—the only remotely feasible means of policing a ban—is regularly denounced by the Soviets, most recently in May, by the *Novosti* agency, as a "ploy to gain access to intelligence materials."

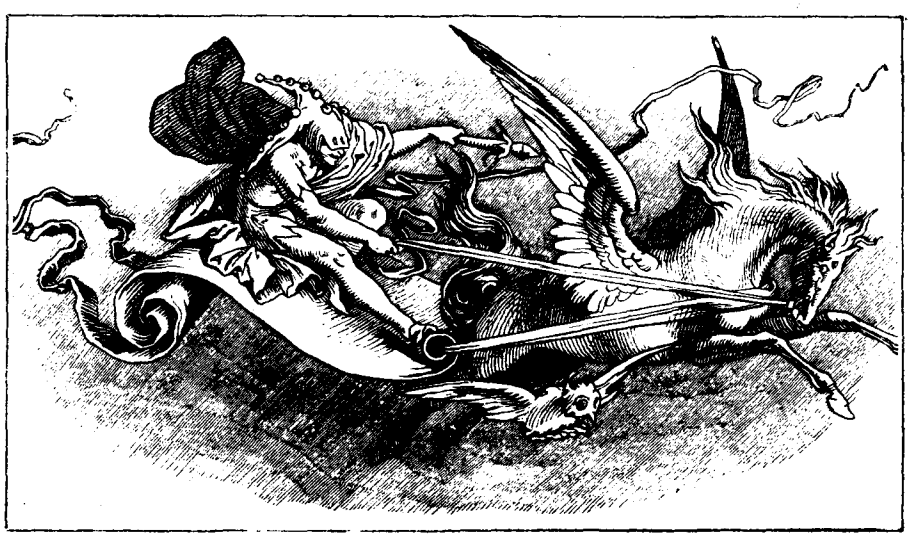
But most important with regard to a treaty like that which President Reagan is proposing is that it is sheer folly to expect Moscow to behave as we did in the "era" defined by a now infrequently utilized term: *détente.* Why should the Soviets negotiate a ban—and destruction of existing stocks—in a realm of weaponry in which they enjoy undisputed superiority?

It should be noted that in the scientific community, there are still a handful of people—a group rapidly decreasing in size—who continue to profess doubt, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that Iranian soldiers (and child-age civilian/soldiers), Afghan rebels, and Hmong tribesmen in Laos, are all victims of the Soviet-manufactured chemical weapon known as "yellow rain." (It was so termed by the Hmong due to the yellowish color of the poison gas it creates upon release.)

These would-be skeptics are part of what the *Wall Street Journal* has aptly termed a "cult of denial," a cult which also embraces those who refuse to recognize the KGB role in the plot to kill the Pope, and some who adamantly resist acknowledging Soviet cheating on existing arms control treaties. In the past, many men and women of similar disposition refused to accept contemporaneous reports of Stalin's purges, or of Hitler's effort to annihilate European Jewry.

Still, virtually no one denies that Moscow has developed a significant, highly advanced chemical warfare capability. It is therefore natural to wonder when the Soviets began to do so.

It is instructive here to consider a concept in psychology known as "projection." Not particularly complicated, it involves *projecting* onto others—attributing or ascribing to them—one's own impulses, motives, and patterns of behavior. If this phenomenon is removed from the realm of interpersonal relations, and is applied to world politics, it quickly becomes apparent that the Soviets present a textbook case.



It was possible to see the syndrome at work this past fall, with the shooting down of Korean Air Lines flight 007. Immediately following its much-belated acknowledgement of responsibility for the actual deed, Moscow unleashed a barrage of accusations. The United States, according to the Soviet charges, regularly uses commercial airplanes—with civilian passengers on board—for espionage purposes. No evidence in support of these allegations was initially brought forth. Recently, an article in the London *Observer* purported to provide new evidence, none of which was either logical or compelling. Sad to say, KAL 007's diversion from its flight plan appears to have been entirely accidental—a not altogether unusual, rather simple, pilot error.

Earlier last year, on the other hand, an Aeroflot flight, on an Atlantic route, "strayed" inexplicably over sensitive U.S. naval installations in Connecticut. And just a few months ago—in March—another Aeroflot passenger jet wandered off course, this time in France. The plane seemed to have found itself in absolutely prohibited air space, directly over a highly sensitive French naval base; the base was in use, at that precise moment, for exercises involving state-of-the-art naval vessels, including France's first nuclear attack submarine. (The Aeroflot jet returned to the USSR before it could be searched for espionage-related equipment.) Looking back at the KAL 007 case, could it be that the Soviets were "projecting"?

For an even clearer example of the phenomenon, go back in history to Prague: November 1952. Former leaders of the Czechoslovak Communist party are suddenly defendants in a Soviet-style "show-trial," charged with treason. Eleven of the fourteen accused are Jews, denounced in court—and in the state-run press—as "rootless Jewish-Zionist cosmopolitans." (Whatever drove Stalin, by then, apparently, entirely mad, and his henchmen to purge devoted Stalinists, such as Rudolf Slansky and the other Czechs in the dock, is, of course,

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another matter.) In any event, the international Communist movement recognized the need to divert world attention from the anti-Semitic barbarism taking place in the courtroom in Prague. A decision was taken to endeavor to focus international scrutiny on the Rosenberg case in New York (hitherto ignored by the Communist movement)—even though the *trial* was long over. Initially, Communists in America and elsewhere turned their backs on the Rosenbergs, two public Party members engaged in espionage and caught red-handed. (A major concern of the American Communist party, at that precise juncture, the time of the Smith Act trials, was to distance Communism—the political creed—from even the remotest semblance of disloyalty.)

But now, suddenly, due to the crass anti-Semitic show-trial in Prague, the plight of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had come in handy. Jacques Duclos, the leader of the French Communist party, defended the Moscow-orchestrated trial in Prague—noting that the defendants had all confessed—and branded the Rosenberg case "a state-sponsored anti-Semitic farce." Soon others, in America and Europe, Party members and fellow travelers, joined the chorus. They fact that the judge and prosecuting attorneys were, like the Rosenbergs and their lawyers, also Jews, merely proved the point, according to the analysis of the pro-Communist *National Guardian* in New York. The Nazis, too, it was noted, had appointed a *Judenrat* (or Jewish Council) in each Polish ghetto, and then charged these *Judenräte* with responsibility for delivering the Jews for "resettlement."

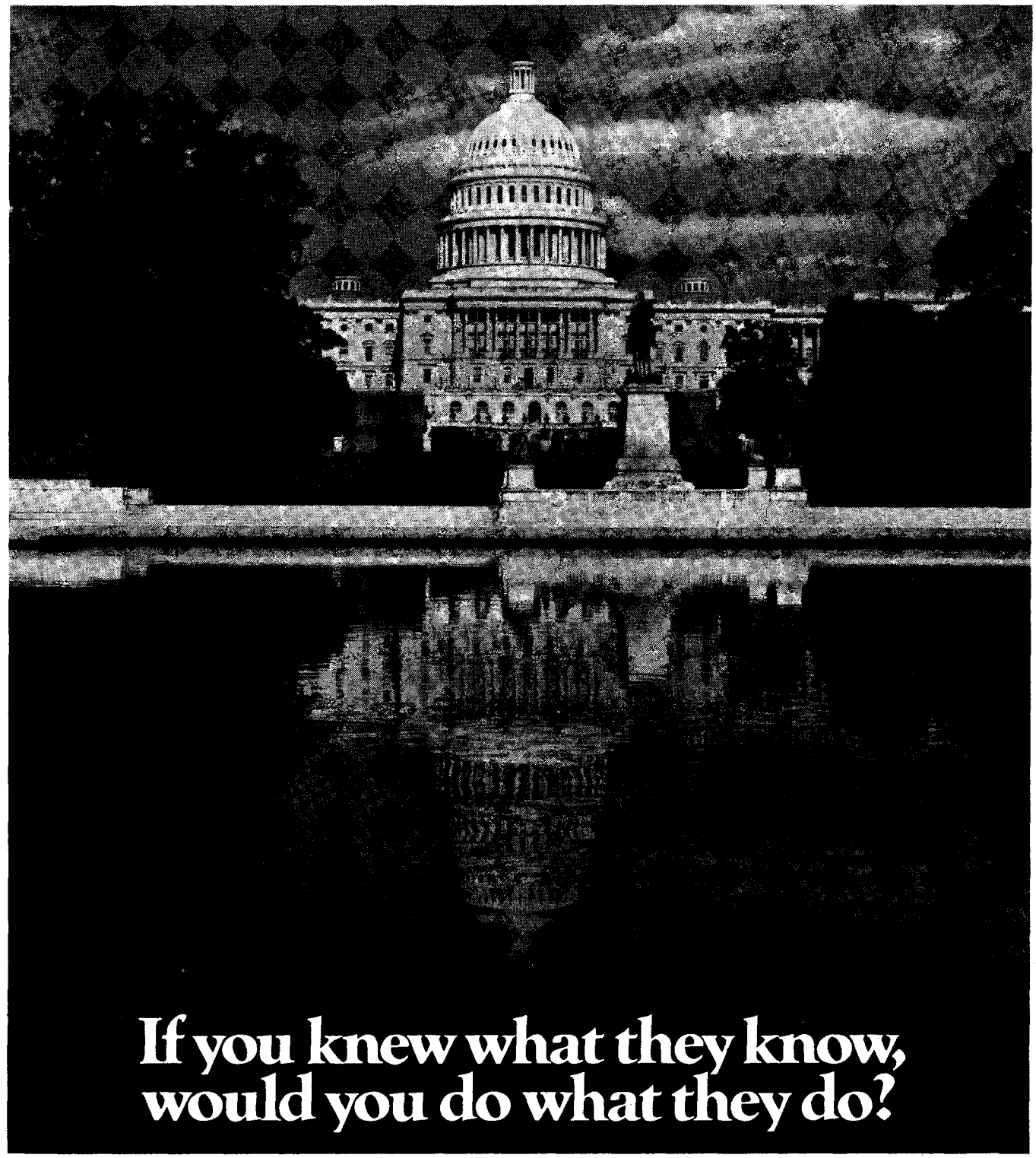
The point, again: The United States was conducting anti-Semitic trials in the early 1950s, at the time of the Slansky trial in Prague and that of Laszlo Raijk and his confederates in Budapest (also a crassly anti-Semitic display); and, of course, the plot by Jewish physicians (also "exposed" in 1952) to murder Stalin.

Projection.

All of which leads back to chemical weapons, which first became an issue between Washington and the Soviets at about the same time as the show-trial in Prague—late 1952. Some months earlier, Moscow, using a front-group still alive and well today—the World Peace Council—accused the U.S. of waging "germ warfare" in Korea. Huge international petitions were gathered; protests were lodged. The World Peace Council president, Frederick Joliot-Curie, a prominent French Communist and the bearer of a uniquely illustrious name in the world of science, took command of the anti-American propaganda campaign. Once again, not a shred of evidence in support of the "germ warfare" propaganda charges was ever produced.

Today, the 1952 propaganda onslaught is all but forgotten. Save for one thing: In recent years, Soviet defectors have confirmed to Western intelligence that shortly after the Second World War, an entire German chemical weapons factory was transported from the Russian zone of occupation back to the USSR. Moscow then began, in earnest, to develop a chemical warfare capability —which was probably ready just about the time the "germ warfare" campaign got underway.

President Reagan may not get anywhere with his proposed ban on chemical weapons. Indeed the silence of "peace groups," "peace candidates," and churches devoted to "disarmament" is—with respect to this issue—truly deafening. But the Soviets have been anything but silent. Moscow's noisy rejection of the American ban as proposed is a reminder to us: In this field, the Soviets have the edge. In addition, the next time they accuse us of some major misdeed, we would do well to remember that they may be telling us something about themselves. They may be projecting. □



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CAPITOL IDEAS

(continued from page 9)

Newsweek told me that at no earlier convention had he been so far from the action. Someone told me the distance was 450 feet.

I made my way to the floor during the parliamentary warm-up (we were allowed there for 30 minutes at a time) and I met Walter Shapiro of *Newsweek* (another *Washington Monthly* alumnus) talking to Murray Kempton (*Newsday*). Shapiro made the most succinct and perceptive comment on the news media-convention relationship that I heard all week. "First the networks made the conventions dull," he said. "Then they abandoned them." He was referring to the much reduced network coverage this year. (Even so, I was told that CBS and NBC each had 600 people on hand, and each would be spending about $7 million on the event.)

I asked Shapiro to elaborate. Once upon a time the conventions were uproarious and interesting and unpredictable, he explained. Network television then broadcast this agreeable pandemonium coast to coast, and everyone liked it except for the party leadership. So they took steps to restore predictability and order to the proceedings, which in turn became so dull that not many people wanted to watch them anymore. And this was where we were today. Moreover, C-Span and Cable Network News were taking over the gavel-to-gavel coverage, and as more and more people have access to these alternative channels the political junkies who actually enjoy watching politicians give speeches will switch to them, and the networks' role will diminish further. It was perhaps significant that inside the press lounge, three out of the four TV monitors (sometimes all four) were switched to C-Span even during the periods of network coverage. The press doesn't need to be told by Dan Rather that Geraldine Ferraro is an Italian ethnic from Queens, and I'm sure the same is true of politics junkies across the land. C-Span thus becomes the first true "medium," like a clear pane of glass between the event and the viewer.

The great unexpected pleasure of the Convention Center turned out to be the Railroad Press Lounge, a huge press freebie sponsored by the Association of American Railroads. This lounge, frequented by as many of 3,000 journalists a day, provided us hacks with free food (ham rolls, roast beef and horse radish, pizza rolls, hot dogs) coffee, tea, Pepsi, Coke, and even an endless supply of free beer. Add to that comfortable chairs, TV monitors, and a couple of Clairol Air Massage "foot fixers," and you can well imagine that it was standing room only in no time.

What about special-interest dread and the Era of Post-Watergate Morality? Had all this gone by the board? I looked about nervously for Bob Woodward and the *Washington Post* SWAT team before settling down with a large cup of foaming Pilsner Lite to watch the Cuomo speech on the monitor. In the *National Journal* (special daily editions were published during the convention) I read that "in normal circumstances the press might flinch from accepting unlimited amounts of free food and drink from a lobbying organization. But for hardship assignments like political conventions, the top priority is survival and that is why the lounge was so crowded on opening day." I was further reassured by Hendrik Hertzberg, the editor of the *New Republic,* and by Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post,* that this was an "old tradition." So I relaxed and contrived to enjoy my beer and pizza. (Cohen added that, although it was true that railroads generally do get favorable press treatment, this was more a matter of "nostalgia" than of sold souls, and I fully agreed with that, too.) If it was good enough for Victor Navasky of the *Nation,* and Ron Reagan, covering the event for *Playboy,* it was good enough for me.

As for the substance of Democratic party policy, what is there to say that hasn't already been aired and mulled over? Alex Brummer of the *Guardian* (England) described Governor Cuomo as looking "like a Chicago gangster . . . He looked like he'd just walked out of an Al Pacino film." The enthusiasm for him at the convention seemed to be uncritical to say the least. When he brought up the budget deficit, I noticed, the people in the press lounge didn't even bother to look up from their food. They had tried for three years to stick President Reagan with this one, to no avail. The Democrats' new-found enthusiasm for reducing the deficit struck me not only as politically inept (the Republicans got nowhere with it for twenty years), but as incoherent. When the Democrats are not complaining about deficits, they impute the recovery to them (rather than admit the success of supply-side theory).

The Democrats this year evidently felt obliged to disguise their increasingly liberal (leftist) ideology with conservative labels and symbols—talk of "family" and the waving of American flags. Cuomo must have been delighted to find that he could use the words "family" to describe the entire country, and yet encounter almost no criticism from the very people who specialize in using words for a living—the press. "We believe in a single fundamental idea . . . " he bellowed. "The idea of family. Mutuality. The sharing of benefits and burdens for the good of all . . . We must be the family of America, we recognize that at the heart of the matter we are bound to one another, that the problems of a retired school teacher in Duluth are our problems. That the future of the child in Buffalo is our future," and so on.

The *New York Times* responded that Cuomo had demonstrated "that it is possible to carry the battle to Ronald Reagan on terms and territory that he had previously made his own: the terms of family and traditional values . . . " It is *possible,* yes, but only with a little help from an "adversary press" that turns into a bodyguard press when the liberal agenda is at stake. "As an Italian Catholic," added *Wall Street Journal* reporters Dennis Farney and David Rogers, "he doesn't just talk about 'family' and 'flags,' he also seeks to wrestle them back as issues for Democrats." Richard Cohen was a little bit more candid when he wrote in the *Washington Post* that what many people "need are political leaders who understand that for many the conventional family is a bygone thing. And they need policies to suit." Well, don't worry Richard. The Democrats will provide them. "Family" was just a code word to appeal to Americans who think the traditional family should be restored.

Likewise, Geraldine Ferraro appealed to the truth that "Americans want to live by the same set of rules." But the Democrats have no intention of instituting such rules. How can they, when they seek to encourage some Americans to live at the expense of others? How can they when they support affirmative action—an explicit recognition of the claim to preferential treatment by virtue of group membership? How can they when they seek to "restore" the "progressivity" of the income tax?

And while on the subject of unequal rules intended to produce equality of outcome, it is worth repeating the interesting item reported by Al Hunt in the *Wall Street Journal* (and I didn't see it anywhere else): The Democratic National Committee decided "to include gays in the list of groups qualifying for affirmative action status in party conventions and on committees . . . Now, the party must actively locate gays to be delegates to future conventions." One wonders whether the media will find it possible to ignore this bombshell in 1988, if the same rule still obtains.

Under the rubric of "dignity" (a codeword that usually means indignity), the Democratic platform further advanced the cause of homosexuals by pledging: "We will assure that sexual orientation *per se* does not serve as a bar to participation in the military."

But I must hand it to Walter Mondale for making the one utterly forthright promise of the convention—the promise to raise taxes if elected. This amazing promise was followed by a stunned silence of perhaps half a second, followed by tepid applause. I must say my immediate reaction was that Reagan had just won the election. But then I reflected that Mondale was perhaps half right, when he said that the Republicans will do the same, because at least some of Reagan's aides *have* been thinking about yet another tax increase. Mondale's candid statement should at least have the beneficial effect of preventing the Republicans from hiding behind their Treasury tax study, due out in December. I can do no better than quote the words of Jude Wanniski in last month's *American Spectator*:

"If the President does not offer the voters a specific tax reform proposal during the campaign, he will be unable to refute the Mondale charges [that the Republicans plan to "increase taxes on the poor and middle class, through some form of national sales tax"]. Mr. Reagan can't simply hide behind a study." That is truer than ever after Mondale's nationally televised speech.

Well, that is enough for one convention. San Francisco is certainly a beautiful city. The temperature dropped down to the 50s in the evenings, which made up for a lot of the hot air. One afternoon I went across the bay to Berkeley, to see what those notoriously radical students were up to. These were the first four bulletins I saw on the Student Notices board opposite Sproul Hall: "Move With Us: Aerobics, Stretching, Toning, try your free introductory class any M, W & F at American Baptist Seminary." "Powerful! HsingI. The world's oldest internal martial art has important benefits for today. Great for your mind!" "T'ai Chi Ch'uan. The Joy of Moving. New Classes, Aug. 1 and 2." "Empty Gate Zen Center of Berkeley Announces a Visit by Master Dharma Teacher Mu Deung Su Nim (Free Public Talk, Wed., July 18)."

Then I walked down Telegraph Avenue and the first book store I came to had just about everything ever published by C.S. Lewis, Dorothy L. Sayers, Charles Williams, Tolkien, and George McDonald. It was a nice sunny afternoon, and everything seemed very quiet and peaceful by comparison with the Democratic Convention. I would gladly have stayed there for the rest of the week. □

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CURRENT WISDOM

San Francisco Chronicle

Poetry and philosophy of cosmic magnitude deposited right here on the correspondence page of the *San Francisco Chronicle,* showcase of terminal egalitarianism:

Editor—An assassin's bullet, rusted by the decades, fells the son to the martyr. A day before the bullet began its slow, deliberate course through history, RFK pulled his son from the sea. Yet a stranger with an itchy finger and a mad impulse, in one day, and in 16 years, reversed the beauty of the heroic act. He changed history for the child. He changed history for every one of us. How many Vietnamese were slain, how many old Americans ate cat food, how many Watergates were committed, how many ideals were bullet-ridden by one half-man with a gun?

Wrinkled actors rule and American cities look like Dresden used to. Bombed out. Rubbles of our dreams. As the son lay cold and dead, the killer with no remorse mutters he has suffered enough. So have we all.

Elliot Schneider
San Francisco

[April 28, 1984]

Ithaca Journal

N. R. Hamilton points out another of the amazing achievements of the homosexual *kultur*:

When one looks upon abortion as death blow to defenseless human beings, one should also look upon the life that those beings and their mothers-to-be would face . . .

We need most to grapple with the real problem—birth control (both moral and physical issues), which only the homosexuals have been able to accomplish successfully. A statement only.

[May 14, 1984]

The Progressive

What the Democratic paladins have all forgotten to hint at, as reported by a woebegone idealist now institutionalized at *The Progressive:*

During the New Hampshire "debate" among the Democratic Presidential contenders, they were asked how they would respond if the war between Iraq and Iran were to precipitate closure of the Straits of Hormuz. To a man, the Democrats agreed—yes, including Jesse Jackson and George McGovern—that there would be no choice but to use American military power in the Persian Gulf to ensure the free flow of oil. None of the candidates so much as hinted that human life might conceivably be more precious than oil.

[April 1984]

Los Angeles Times

A memorable interlude with that suave old scatologist and crackshot, William S. Burroughs:

The gallows humor has been well earned. Burroughs has survived a life punctuated by tragedy, including heroin addiction and the death of his wife, who was accidentally killed in 1951 when he tried to shoot a whiskey glass off her head. Burroughs' son died in 1981 after losing a lengthy battle against drugs and drink.

Noting that the surroundings were similar to the area near his childhood home in St. Louis, Burroughs said he enjoyed the proximity to a landscape dotted with trees and water. "There's lots of country there," he said, "I'm five minutes from a shopping center and there's an accessible pistol range, which is one of my favorite diversions."

"No one who's read my books would find that odd," he said, waving his smooth, unlined writer's hands in the air. "I may disagree with the NRA on many issues, but I was brought up around guns as a child. I'm comfortable with them. I've never had any call to use them."

[February 16, 1984]

New York Times

In the correspondence section of the illustrious *Times* of New York Miss Natalie Angier demonstrates her strong belief in the value of advertising:

To the Editor:

Everybody seems to believe the old saw that women are monogamous and men promiscuous ("When Women Want Marriage and Men Don't," letter May 9). It's not true.

At 26, I've been involved in more relationships where the man wanted stability and fidelity while I, well, had difficulty resisting temptation than vice versa. I think one's attitude toward coupling stems from one's background. My parents were divorced, and I have little reason to believe in marriage. Many men I've known come from happier families and want the same pleasures of hearth and home for themselves.

Besides, men are not such perfectly self-confident creatures that they don't need a little support in their lives. Perhaps they do settle down later than women, but most eventually want somebody they can love and trust. You don't get that from a one-night stand.

Natalie Angier
New York

[May 17, 1984]

Fort Lauderdale News/Sun-Sentinel

A bull from the lonely and intellectual Miss Jane Frederick, jock Kremlinologist and "a Pentathlete on the 1972 and 1976 Olympic teams" taking aim at the Los Angeles extravaganza:

I don't believe in communism as a desirable political or economic system but I do not require a like belief in order to compete on a sporting field. We must speak out against any political group that would use the Olympic Games for their own purposes. We cannot control the abuse of sporting victories by others, such as the Eastern countries, but we can control the political abuse of these games within our own society. I feel strongly that in order to convince the Soviets to change their minds, they need to see that the American people oppose such fanaticism and anti-Sovietism for the sake of a neutral competition.

The Soviets don't want to bring their athletes into an atmosphere of political tension . . .

This time, they feel a sincere threat to the safety of their athletes . . .

For once in all my dealings with the Soviets, I find that they are being straightforward and open in their reasons for withdrawing their team. They are afraid to subject their athletes to the harassment which awaits them outside the Village gates. And they are right to do so. I don't feel there is much vindictiveness expressed in their withdrawal from our Games. The precedent had already been set.

We must show the Soviets and East Germans that we want them in our Olympic Games, that we respect and appreciate their athletes as great competitors irregardless of political, religious or cultural background. Are we not generous enough to put aside our political sentiments to allow our guests the freedom to come here unharassed, to compete for the two weeks of the Olympic Games?

We started the abuse in 1980. Let's not continue it in 1984 with our silence.

[May 13, 1984]

Los Angeles Herald-Examiner

More evidence of racial progress in the great and liberal Republic:

A blue-eyed [Stockton, CA] councilman who says he is black is actually a racial pretender, according to a black leader who is trying to have the councilman recalled.

"If the mamma is an elephant and the daddy is an elephant, they durn sure can't have no lion," says former councilman Ralph White, a black who has petitioned to have councilman Ralph K. Stebbins recalled from office.

Stebbins, whose birth certificate lists his parents as white and doesn't stipulate the baby's color, is "a white guy with a perm and vinegar in his hair," says White.

The light-skinned, red-haired Stebbins says he is black "culturally, socially, and genetically."

The question arose at a rally before a black audience during last fall's election campaign.

"When they asked me if I was white or black, I told them I was black," says Stebbins.

"I should have told them I'm human or it's none of your business or it's not an issue," he said. "That's when the controversy started."

Stebbins, 41, born in Colville, Wash., concedes his birth certificate doesn't prove he's black and admits everyone in his family including four sisters, a brother, and both sets of grandparents are white except for him. . . .

White said many residents of the largely black district in the city of 150,000, 80 miles east of San Francisco, would not have voted for Stebbins if they knew he was white.

"This is the kind of consequence that racism gives us," says black studies Professor Mark Ealey of the University of the Pacific.

[March 12, 1984]

Philadelphia Inquirer

Mr. Spencer Coxe, secretary of the growing "Due Process for Lizzie Borden League," writes in to defend the great feminist and to speculate upon the gruesome way Lizzie might be passing the time were she alive today:

Miss Borden was acquitted of killing her parents. It is posterity, abetted by lurid journalism, that has converted this genteel daughter of a Fall River mortician into an eponymous murderer. If Miss Borden were alive today she would be turning over in her grave at the comparison with Marge Tartaglione.

[February 27, 1984]

The White House

Our President solicits the views of one of his most powerful supporters, a fat cat who annually bestows upon the Republican National Committee a contribution of $1.00:

Mr. Paul H. Vivian
Bloomington, Indiana 47402

Dear Mr. Vivian:

I would like you to write and say how you feel about the job I've done as your President.

I know it is a bit unusual for you to receive a request from the President of the United States asking you to write.

But I'm taking this unprecedented step because rather than asking you a set of questions on a survey I would prefer your opinion on the matters that are of most concern to you.

You have been such a good friend and generous supporter of the Congressional Committee that even if you just want to write a short note of encouragement Nancy and I would deeply appreciate it . . .

I hope you'll take a moment to write and share your thoughts.

But without your financial help the Committee simply won't be able to give our candidates the assistance they need to win.

I'm counting on you to send your most generous contribution to the 1984 GOP Victory Fund today.

Sincerely,
Ronald Reagan

[May 21, 1984]

Detroit Free Press

A mysterious contretemps staggers the High and Mighty of the Motor City:

A May 16 Detroit City Council resolution praising controversial Muslim minister Louis Farrakhan has prompted council members to question the way they pass resolutions.

The Muslim minister was criticized Thursday by Jesse Jackson for recent anti-Semitic remarks.

The resolution, which the council passed unanimously, called Farrakhan "a man of character, sacrifice, compassion, hope, love and understanding for the struggle of the nation of black people."

Said Councilman David Eberhard: "It slipped by me. I would not have voted for it . . . if I voted for it, I'm sorry."

[June 30, 1984]

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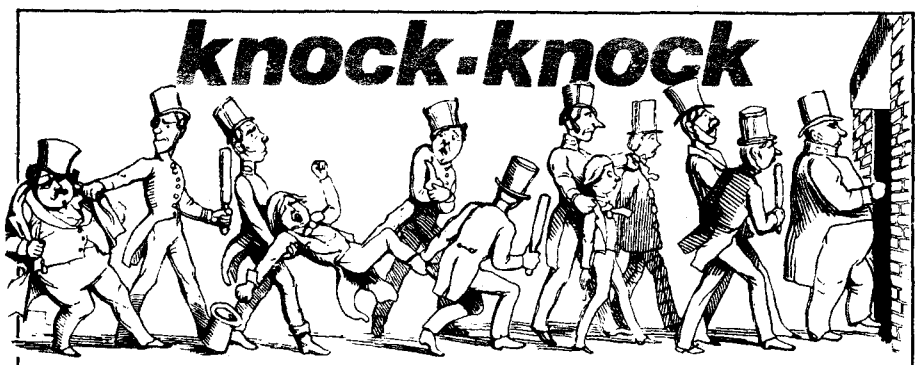

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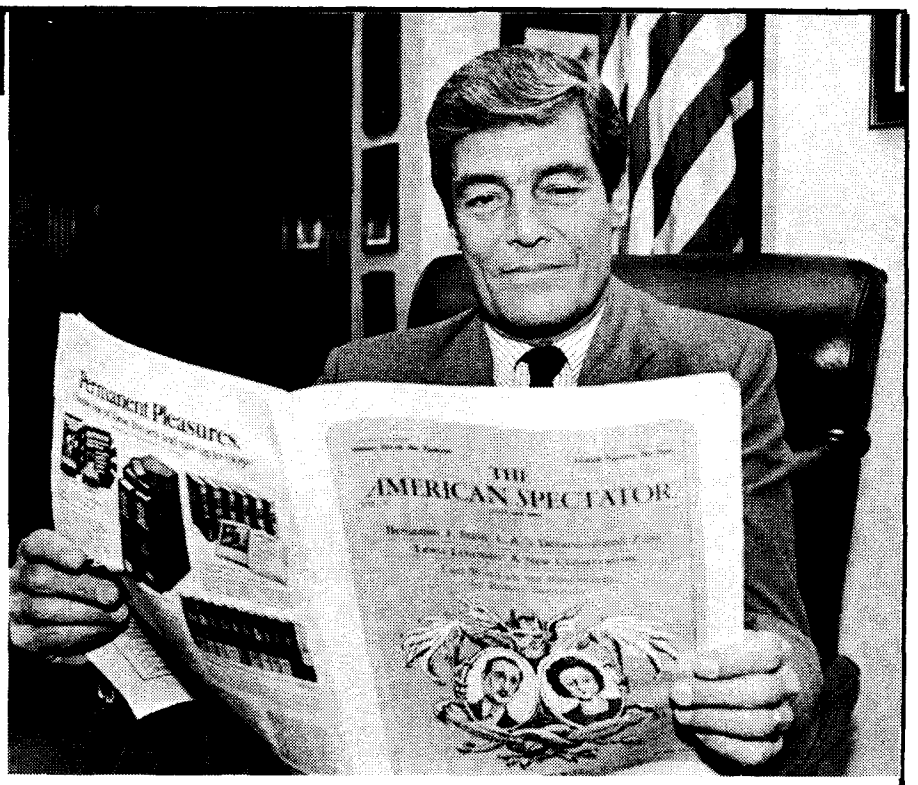

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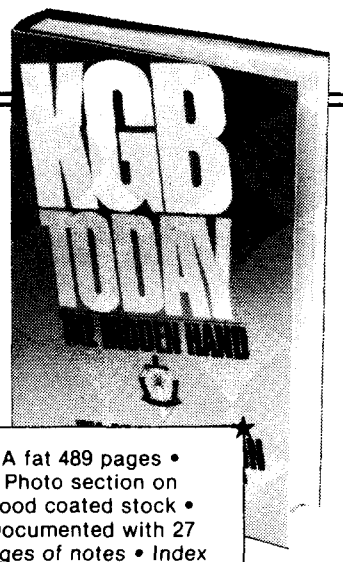

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